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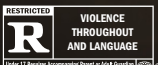
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Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell is viewed by many as Hammer's last hurrah. Forty years later, we ask if it was a gravestone or a swan song. **PLUS:** Best known for donning Darth Vader's cape, David Prowse really relishes his turn as the creature in the film, and a review of *Frankenstein Created Woman*.

by **MICHAEL DOYLE** and **JAMES BURRELL**

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by **APRIL SNELLINGS**

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Night of the Demons gets a special edition release; director Kevin Tenney joins us for a look back at his unexpected cult classic.

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NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND



If horror ever gets its own version of The Razzies – the anti-Academy Awards that celebrate/shame the worst mainstream movies of the year – they should be called The Van Helsing, after the 2004 Stephen Sommers movie starring Hugh Jackman as the titular monster hunter with romance novel hair, Inspector Gadget weaponry and enough cheesy one-liners to bloat Dracula's moat. For me, it sets the lowest bar for how obnoxious, stupid and shallow a genre film can be. *I, Frankenstein* comes dangerously close to lowering that bar even further, though. Chosen last issue as Least Anticipated in 2014, I'm confident that there won't be a worse horror project released this year (I know what you're thinking, but the *Friday the 13th* remake sequel isn't due 'til 2015).

If you haven't seen it, this adaptation of the comic book by *I, Frankenstein* screenwriter/executive producer Kevin Grevioux (also an actor in the *Underworld* movies) begins in the tracks of Mary Shelley's novel with a flashback montage of the monster horrifying its maker, killing Frankenstein's bride in a fit of revenge, being pursued through the Arctic, and eventually burying the doctor, who succumbs to the elements. Then – cue needle scratching across record – our monster is attacked by cartoon-y demons, but saved by cartoonier gargoyles who inform him that they were created by the Archangel Michael to fight the hellspawn. They want our protagonist (named "Adam") to join them, but, to paraphrase *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, he's a loner, Dear Reader, a rebel, so instead they give him some magic ass-kicking sticks and send him on his way for 200 years. Flash forward to modern times and the gargoyles live in a gargantuan church and dress like gladiators; the demons, disguised as humans in business suits, pursue scientific means to unlock the secret of immortality in order to build a demon army, and Adam wanders around looking like a squeegee kid. Then a lot of stuff blows up.

Reviewers have rightfully pointed out that the movie itself is a postmodern Frankenstein job that stitches together bits of other films. Brought to us by some of the makers of the *Underworld* and *The Matrix* series, it liberally rips off both those franchises while grabbing from *The Lord of the Rings* and *300*, as well. Like *Van Helsing*, *Priest* and *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters*, it's an effects-driven mix of action, fantasy, martial arts and sci-fi with some monsters tossed in. It's never frightening, it has awful dialogue and zero character development, but tries to dazzle with gimmicky weapons, flashy technology, narratively inexplicable wire fighting, female characters who are ogle magnets for teenage boys, explosions and more explosions. (Did I mention the explosions?) The thinking behind it seems to be that no one wants to see a big-budget *Frankenstein* movie, so let's make a superhero movie we can also sell to horror fans.

I'm a firm believer that our favourite creatures and their myths should be reinvented through the ages. Blade, for example, is a fantastically fun re-imagining of the vampire as a comic book superhero. (For a great example of the reverse, in which the superhero is reimagined as a psychotic monster, read Joe Hill's exceptional graphic novel *The Cape*.) But here's the thing: we relate to the mythologies of Dracula and Frankenstein in very different ways. Vampires are most often sexy, powerful immortals – good dressers with cool castles and a variety of super(natural)powers. They represent something desirable, which is why there are subcultures where people obsess over them to the point of claiming to be actual vampires. Aside from childhood imitations, this doesn't happen with Frankenstein's monster. He's the lumbering, rage-filled beast, hunted and hated for being ugly. He's a shit dresser with no fixed address who gets zero babes. His immortality is a damnable suffering – he's the pitiable byproduct of the "Modern Prometheus" of the book's title. We *feel* him more than envy him.

That concept is absolutely essential to the myth of this ultimate outsider, and why we're drawn towards its morality tale about playing god. With Hollywood cynicism, *I, Frankenstein* strips that out by giving us a frankenhottie. Eckhart's "monster" has a chiselled profile, ripped abs, slight scarring that some cover-up would erase and – stab me with a pitchfork – wears eyeliner! Yes, this is a sexy Frankenstein who has a love interest and looks like he should be fronting an emo band. Yet, the character from the *I, Frankenstein* comic book looks more like Marv from *Sin City*, and – as our office manager, Ron, pointed out to me – the protagonist concept art for the film, by Martin Mercer (easy to find with a Google search), was considerably gnarlier than that. Somewhere along the line he was sexed up and dumbed down to presumably attract the same demographic as *Twilight* and *Warm Bodies*.

The Hammer *Frankenstein* cycle, on the other hand, is an excellent example of toying with the core concepts and characters, changing the dynamic of the relationships between Dr. Frankenstein and his creation, tweaking the look of the creature (if not always successfully) and delving into the madness and moral consequences of the Modern Prometheus. *Frankenstein Created Woman* in particular is one of the most clever and compelling reworkings of any classic horror tale, as it completely subverts some of the myth's core concepts of beauty and gender. Its why these movies continue to speak (and grunt angrily) to us half of a century later.

The creators of *I, Frankenstein* could learn from Hammer that if you're going to use the name "Frankenstein," you need to have some sort of a Frankensteinian myth. And if you're going to make a movie about Frankenstein's monster, you might also wanna have, like, y'know... an actual monster.

Dave
Alex

dave@rue-morgue.com

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COVER: FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL

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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



EXCITED AS I pick up *RM#141* and see *Here Comes the Devil* on the cover, which I had just seen. Then (and I bet you don't get mail about your ads), I saw the full-page ad for the upcoming DVD/Blu-ray release of *Thundercrack!* Been waiting for this restored version from Synapse since they mentioned it in 2009. But here's the real kicker: guess what T-shirt I just happened to be wearing? See the photo... Thank you, *Rue Morgue*, for a very serendipitous day!

TODD JAEGER – PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA



BIG THANKS FOR the article on Adrian Garcia Bogliano's latest film, *Here Comes the Devil*, in *RM#141*. More specifically, I really appreciate the accompanying article on his filmography. I remember seeing an online clip for *36 Pasos* a few years ago and being intrigued, but never bothering to follow up on it. Thanks to your article, though, I was able to view a later film of Bogliano's, *Penumbra*, on Netflix last night and loved it. I now know where to go to seek out *36 Pasos* and his other films. It's pretty refreshing to find a talented writer/director who embraces horror films. Keep up the great work!

WAYNE ENGBRETSON – ATLANTA, GEORGIA

JUST PICKED UP *RM#141* and I have to say, hands down the best thing I have ever read in your magazine was the alternative horror movie cuts piece. I thumbed through to your Year in Review, which I was in total disagreement with in most selections. Best Film You Didn't See: *You're Next*? That pile of crap was another Adam Wingard horror queef that was slapped together and produced faster than a porno flick. The one that really twisted my horror heart was Best Remake: *Maniac*... whaaaaat? That was hands down another pile of remake shit that made me realize that once you get famous you can do anything you want. I did finally find common ground with your decisions to call out *Dexter* as Biggest Disappointment for its fucking horrible season finale. And *Twixt*, what a fucking shit monster of a failure. Lastly, I work in a bookstore and the final insult was the Joe Hill book *NOS4A2* as Best Book. As far as being a solid genre novel, I didn't see that to be the

case. There were far more complex and much more appetizing books that came out in 2013. That said, I am a very loyal reader and always will be.

MIKE GUY – ADDRESS WITHHELD

AS A PRACTICING psychologist with a background in sexual assault education and a regular reader of your magazine, I felt compelled to respond to the Gore-met's review of *I Spit on Your Grave 2* [*RM#140*] – and more specifically the (well-intentioned) assertion that films like this are “needed” to provide audiences with a better understanding of the grim realities of rape. Unfortunately, films like this do more harm than good, by adhering to traditional cultural scripts about perpetrators and victims and thus distorting the reality of rape. While the typical cinematic rape scenario involves brutish strangers committing violent sexual assault, in reality 85 percent of all rapes (90 percent on college campuses) involve a perpetrator who is a friend, romantic partner or acquaintance of the victim. Physical force is often not used, as women and girls are socialized to avoid violent resistance, especially against someone they know and possibly like. Therefore, most rapists take advantage of incapacitation due to drugs or alcohol, or simply engage in nonconsensual sexual activity despite the victim's protests. Because the perpetrators are usually known to the victim, victim responses are far more complex than is usually portrayed in the rape-revenge subgenre. People don't like to accept the fact that someone they know and like is capable of rape, and therefore it is common for victims to remain silent, to blame themselves, and sometimes even to date a perpetrator after the assault. So how do these films do harm? By recycling the same cultural script over and over, viewers are conditioned to believe that they reflect the most common and accurate rape scenario. Therefore, when perpetrators don't act like the violent thugs in the films, or when victims seem more worried about the perpetrator getting into trouble than exacting gruesome revenge, we are likely to believe that a “real rape” did not occur. This makes victims less likely to report or to be supported by their friends. It also makes perpetrators more comfortable with their own behavior because, after all, they are not hitting or mutilating their victims. While these films may have value as exercises in horror or cathartic spectacle, they should never be mistaken as accurate or even useful depictions of rape.

JOHN-PAUL CHECKETT, PH.D. – ADDRESS WITHHELD

HAVING RECENTLY bought an iPad, I appreciate you writing about the game *Monster Loves You!* in *RM#140*. You opened my eyes up to something I would have otherwise overlooked. Don't ever stop the video game reviews!

ANDREW ROOTZ, VIA FACEBOOK

CORRECTION:

In *RM#141* we incorrectly identified the production company for *Dexter*. The show aired on Showtime. We regret the error.

EXPIRING MINDS...

ON RUE MORGUE'S FACEBOOK PAGE

Who's your favourite female monster?

I'd have to go with Medusa. The Caravaggio painting (above) is my favourite depiction of her.

G EDWIN TAYLOR

Lily Munster

THOMAS KERNBICHLER

La Femme from *Inside*.

NICHOLAS A. SÁNCHEZ

Not monsters, just beautiful women who are misunderstood indeed. So I'll say all of them.

BONNY BRIDGEWATERS

The leech woman puppet from *Puppet Master*.

JILL ORIENTE

The Bride of Frankenstein – beautiful and a great conversationalist.

MICHAEL CALLMERABBI SANDAL

Hecate: Ancient Greek Goddess of Magic/Witchcraft, daughter of Zeus.

JOSE L COSTA

Ann Coulter.

SETH BLADIMIRSQUY

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NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

ONLINE SEMINARS CATER TO MONSTER LOVERS WORLDWIDE

It wasn't long ago that the study of horror cinema and literature was frowned upon by those in the upper echelons of higher education, many of whom claimed there was little intrinsic value in the dissection of such pop culture diversions, but times are a-changing. And so too are the ways we learn. No longer are studies confined within the brick-and-mortar walls of colleges and universities. Now distance courses and seminars such as those offered by Kristen Hutchinson (pictured below) are accessible to anyone who is interested and internet-connected.

"[In 2011] I began teaching seminars about contemporary art and television in my living room as an alternative to teaching university courses," explains Hutchinson, who has been fascinated by monsters since she was a child. "I wanted to give seminars using a salon or book club model where people who wanted to learn more about art, television and film could get together to discuss and share ideas. It is also amazing for me to teach non-credit, independent seminars to people who really want to learn rather than simply to fulfill an academic requirement or get a grade."

Hutchinson, who holds degrees from academic institutions in three countries, branched out into online seminars in order to give people outside of her homebase of Edmonton, Alberta, a chance to participate. That said, the courses still tend to be small, intimate and affordable, typically catering to four to eight students per session, with an

emphasis on interaction and discussion (via the use of Adobe Connect software).

"In the Supernatural Creatures in Popular Culture seminars we look at both film and television," says Hutchinson of the curriculum. "Each week focuses on a different creature in American, Canadian and European art, film and television. In the first seminar we talk about vampires, werewolves, ghosts, demons, witches and zombies. Everyone watches a television episode and film before class. For example, for zombies, we will be discussing *The Walking Dead* and the British film *Shaun of the Dead*. For the second part, we look at superheroes, aliens, woodland creatures, angels, sea monsters and magicians. In the woodland creatures class, we watch the TV series *Lost Girl* and the Spanish film *Pan's Labyrinth*."



Prospective attendees can sign up for the entire six-week cycle of seminars, which launches in early May, or drop in for a single class. Hutchinson also provides students with optional readings, and emails registered attendees a slide list and the planned discussion questions before the session. The seminars themselves are comprised of a lecture, with related images and videos presented via PowerPoint. All online sessions are recorded, so if a

student signs up for the full run and misses a class, the proceedings can still be accessed at his or her leisure.

In addition to offering her monster seminars, Hutchinson is also working on a book about su-

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Matthias Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece (detail)*, 1512-1516

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pernatural creatures in popular culture and contemporary art. She's given the enduring popularity of monsters a great deal of thought.

"I think there is an interesting correlation between the popularity of supernatural creatures and periods of great technological change," she notes, citing how monsters from the Gothic period of the 18th and 19th century were, in some degree, reactions to the changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution.

"We are now living in the age of rapid technological change, especially in terms of social media, so our current fascination with supernatural creatures is tied to this period of transition," she elaborates. "Supernatural creatures are an excellent vehicle for thinking about issues of morality and what it means to be human."

For more information about Hutchinson's seminars or to sign up, visit kh1art.ca/seminars.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



SOMETHING WEIRD FOUNDER MIKE VRANEY SUCCUMBS TO CANCER

Grindhouse movie lovers lost one of their heroes on January 2, with the passing of Mike Vraney, founder of Something Weird Video. Vraney, who died of lung cancer at age 56, founded the Seattle-based company in 1990 in order to bring the grindhouse and drive-in experience to home video. He developed a love for the oft-disparaged exploitation films as a result of working as a projectionist in his teens.

"[T]he last great genre to be scavenged were the exploitation/exploitation films of the '30s through the '70s," he explained on the company's website.

Vraney, who released over 2500 titles through the imprint, is credited with reigniting interest in the work of filmmakers such as Doris Wishman (*Let Me Die a Woman, A Night to Dismember*), Andy Milligan (*The Ghastly Ones, Bloodthirsty Butchers*), Frank Henenlotter (*Basket Case, Frankenhooker*) and Herschell Gordon Lewis (*Blood Feast, 2000 Maniacs*). Vraney even named his company after Lewis' 1967 film *Something Weird*.

"Mike Vraney combined three traits seldom acknowledged in the brutal world of film distribution: integrity, salesmanship and warmth," says Lewis. "To say he will be missed is a huge understatement."

Vraney formed several long friendships with people in the film industry, including Henenlotter, who worked with him for more than twenty years to rescue oddities for the Something Weird catalogue (he also curated the company's Sexy Shockers line of films). He says that even though they lived far apart, they were very close.

"Though he'd been battling cancer for the past year, his personality was so strong that him no longer being here seems inconceivable," says Henenlotter. "Our friendship was fuelled by our love of movies, and Mike loved movies like nobody else. ... It felt like we talked every day and mostly I remember us laughing. He and I were completely different personalities – which is probably why our friendship worked – and I loved it when he would come to New York or we'd meet up in Los Angeles, and all we'd do is eat, drink and laugh. At least that's how it felt."

He also recalls that Vraney's house was like "an elegant museum – full of comics and art and memorabilia" that paid tribute to his love of film.

"I keep remembering how much fun it was to visit him and, once it got dark, the screen would be lowered, the 16mm projector would come out, and we'd watch films like *Damn Citizen* and *Angel Baby*,"



The Ghastly Ones, and (top) company founder Mike Vraney.

says Henenlotter.

Through Something Weird, Vraney inspired other genre fans to seek out, restore and re-release their own beloved cinematic oddities. Imprints such as Synapse Films, Blue Underground and Grindhouse Releasing all arrived in the wake of Something Weird.

Bob Murawski, head of Grindhouse Releasing echoes the sentiment that Vraney was first and foremost a fan with an austere love for film.

"I only met Mike a couple of times but I was a huge fan of everything he did. His love of exploitation films was unparalleled. Mike saved a thousand

movies that would have been lost forever. He was a giant in the world of cinema."

Vraney was also instrumental in developing the larger fan culture for grindhouse cinema, as younger generations were able to watch the titles that hadn't been seen since the heyday of New York City's 42nd Street theatres.

Cashiers du Cinemart editor Mike White, counts himself among them. "Without Mike Vraney, the world would have been a far less fun place," he says. "I don't even want to think about how many hours I've spent watching Something Weird titles. Without Mike, I probably never would have experienced the gore, sexploitation and fun that makes being a movie fan enjoyable."

Vraney is survived by his wife Lisa, who was also instrumental in running Something Weird, and his children Mark and Danielle.

KRISTY JETT



ORIGINAL *BLACK DEVIL DOLL* DIRECTOR RETURNS

Best known for the infamous 1984 D.I.Y. horror *Black Devil Doll from Hell*, long-lost cult director Chester Novell Turner is back to direct a sequel to his last film, 1987's *Tales from the Quadead Zone*.

Fantastically crude subject matter, strange electronic scores and a strong African-American voice made Turner's work stand out among the shot-on-video horrors of the '80s, yet his films left little impression at the time. After making *Tales from the Quadead Zone* – an anthology featuring Shirley L. Jones (also the star of *Black Devil Doll* – pictured with Turner) as a woman who reads stories to the ghost of her son – Turner hung up his video camera.

“Back then, people liked the films, but the only distribution I had was me personally going to stores [to sell the videos]. So not many peo-

ple got the chance to see them,” explains Turner.

Finding the movie business hardly a lucrative venture, Turner left to work as a contractor. Unbeknownst to him, his work slowly gained no-

toriety among D.I.Y. horror fans (including filmmaker Jonathan Louis Lewis, who made *Black Devil Doll* in 2007, which also features a raping, murderous ventriloquist dummy). Since he had no online presence, Turner was rumoured to be dead, until Louis Justin of DVD/VHS distribution label Massacre Video tracked him down.

“I called virtually all of the Turners in [his hometown of] Chicago, but noth-

ing really came of that,” recalls Justin, whose nearly decade-long search ended after a video store in the city gave him a lead on the name of a business that the former filmmaker owned. Turner was shocked to discover he had a fol-

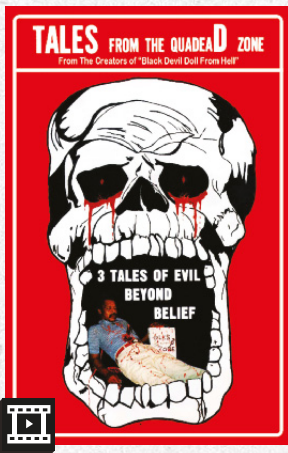
lowing. “When I first heard about the fanbase of my films, I did not really believe Louis, but once we went to Cinema Wasteland [an Ohio-based horror convention], I saw all of the fans of these films and they inspired me to make another.”

Justin and Turner are currently in production on *Tales of the Quadead Zone 2*, which will feature Jones in a segment called “Family Reunion.” They hope to wrap principle photography by the end of the summer.

“Both of Turner's films represent a very exciting era in home video/film history,” explains Justin. “These

films are both very genuine, and Chester made them due to the pure fact he wanted to. I guess in a way you can call them folk art, and once you watch them – love them or hate them – you will never forget them.”

PATRICK DOLAN



ENTRAILS

➤ Legendary kung-fu producer and media mogul, Run Run Shaw, died January 7, aged 106. Shaw was often credited as inventing the kung-fu genre and was well known for his low-budget horror films, including *Five Fingers of Death* and *Man of Iron*. As well as being a prominent producer of movies, Shaw also worked in television, at one point gaining 80 percent control of the Hong Kong market. He gave generously to charities and earned a knighthood in 1977 for his endeavours.

➤ Italian composer Riz Ortolani died at age 87, on January 23, in Rome, due to complications from bronchitis. With a background in jazz, he composed his first score for the 1962 film *Mondo Cane*, which won a Grammy and was nominated for an Oscar. His other notable genre scores include *Africa Addio* (1966), *House on the Edge of the Park* (1980) and *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980). More recently, his music

could be heard in films such as *Inglourious Basterds*, *Drive* and *Django Unchained*.

➤ In the run up to *Wolf Creek 2*, two books serving as prequels to the movies have been released. The first, *Origins*, focuses on lead character Mick as a young man and the events that turn him into a murderer. The second, *Desolation Game*, follows him to Vietnam where he becomes a trained hunter/killer. The novels – available from

Penguin Books Australia – are co-written by *Wolf Creek* director Greg McLean and award-winning Australian horror author Brett McBean.

➤ Tom Sullivan is the subject of the new documentary *Invaluable: The True Story of an Epic Artist*. Sullivan was the makeup effects artist, animator and designer for all of the *Evil Dead* movies and is responsible for creating the Book of the Dead. The film will have a general release in theatres and DVD later this year.

➤ Record label One Way Static has started a new subscription service called Static Club. Members will secure a limited edition copy of each of their four new releases and can choose their desired format (LP, LP and tape, or tape). There are 288 subscriptions available and the first two releases will be soundtracks to *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) and *Cannibal Ferox* (1981), which are expected to ship this month. Subscriptions available at onewaystatic.com.

➤ There are plans to open a US version of Switzerland's H.R. Giger Bar. The *Alien*-themed bar, designed by Giger, who was responsible for the legendary look of the film, is set to launch within the new Sci Fi Hotel being developed by graphic designer Andy Davies. Davies described his hotel as a “cat tree for geeks,” which will include commissioned artwork, a comic and book library, gaming on demand and media installations. Davies is currently seeking investors and hopes to announce the first location this year.

CHARLOTTE STEAR

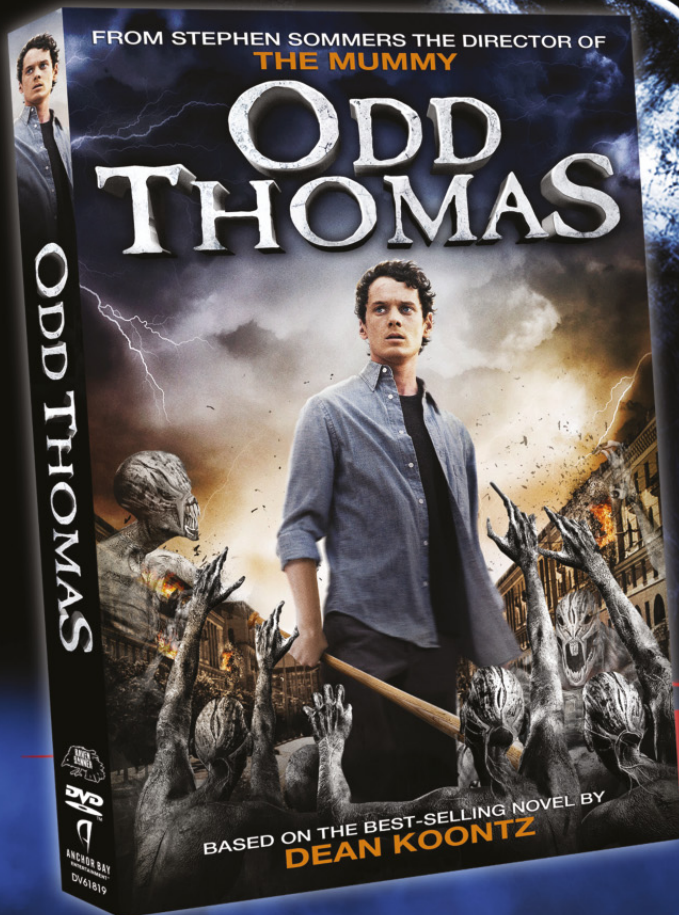
MONSTRO BIZARRO

A research project has been launched in an effort to prove the existence of a bipedal, ape-like creature said to inhabit the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Dubbed the Orang Pendek Project, it consists of researchers trying to gather, document and analyze data in support of the creature known as the Orang Pendek (Indonesian for “short person”). This shadowy human-like primate, which is said to be no more than 5 feet (1.5 m) in height, has a long history of sightings dating back to 1923 when a Dutch colonist first reported seeing “a dark and hairy creature” in the jungle. Several footprints have also been discovered in the last few years, giving the Orang Pendek team – which includes Cliff Barackman (*Finding Bigfoot*) and noted cryptozoologist Adam Davies – confidence that the creature exists. (More info at cliffbarackman.com/research/orang-pendek-project.)

LYLE BLACKBURN

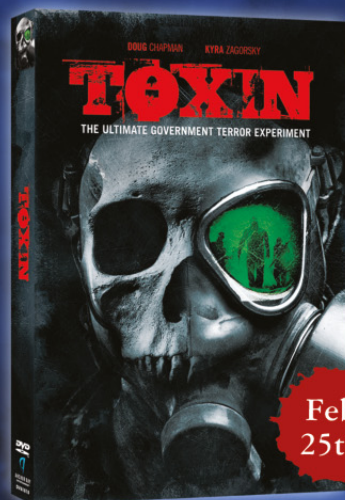
MORE MONSTRO BIZARRO AT RUE-MORGUE.COM

From the Director of
THE MUMMY
and Best Selling Author
DEAN KOONTZ

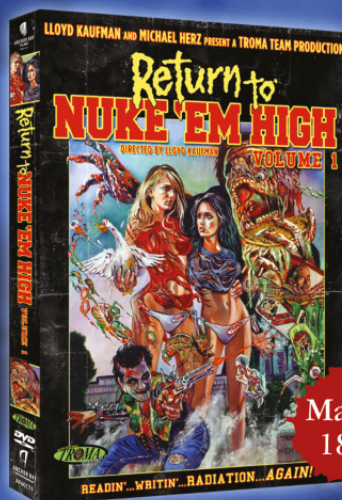


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CORONER'S REPORT ★

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO.

142

A Maryland mother allegedly stabbed two of her four children to death in January after attempting to perform a group exorcism on her offspring.

Chicago bar Kuma's Corner angered the Catholic church when it launched its "Ghost Burger," which is named after the Swedish metal band and served with an unconsecrated Communion wafer.

Blood Falls, Antarctica, is named after the waterfall that runs blood red there, staining the surrounding snow. The effect is caused by a subterranean lake that is extremely rich in iron.

In the wake of the *The Bad Seed's* 1956 theatrical release, all children were banned from movie houses where the film was screening. The US film classification board cited its concerns about potential copycat violence.

The bodies of a US woman and Canadian woman were accidentally sent to the wrong families earlier this year after the pair died on the island of St. Maarten around the same time. One woman was subsequently cremated before the error was discovered.

Molly Ringwald was originally offered the part of Sidney Prescott in Wes Craven's *Scream* (1996).

The melting effect of global warming on the glaciers near the Italian village of Peio is revealing the long-frozen corpses of soldiers from WWI's White War, as well as other wartime artifacts.

The original working title of Poppy Z. Brite's 1994 novel *Drawing Blood* was *Birdland*; it was renamed by the publisher in hopes of cashing in on the success of Brite's debut vampire novel *Lost Souls*.

When convicted murderer Dennis McQuire was executed in Ohio in January by an untested cocktail of drugs, he allegedly gasped and snorted for ten minutes before expiring, according to witnesses.

Stephen King's name was spelled incorrectly in the original trailer for Brian DePalma's adaptation of *Carrie*.

In a case of data mining gone wrong, a grieving Illinois father recently received a piece of promo mail from office supplies chain Office Max addressed to "Mike Seay, Daughter Killed in Car Crash."

A study published in the May 2001 edition of the *Annals of Internal Medicine* compared the lifespans of Oscar winners with similarly successful and wealthy actors who were not nominated for awards, discovering the winners lived on average 3.9 years longer.

Early Christians considered embalming, as practiced by various cultures via the mummification of the dead, to be a "pagan custom" and refused to be interred in that manner.

COMPILED BY MONICA S. KUEBLER AND BRETT MCNEILL
GOT A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT? SEND IT TO: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM

BODY HORROR

THE INVISIBLE MAN

ARTIST: Shaun Kama (halloweentattoos.com)

◀ "I did this super-fun tattoo on a young lad's foot last December at a friend's shop in Arlington, Texas, called Urban Ink. It took approximately four hours to complete. We found the image in an old classic-horror book from the '60s – I collect books of that flavour. We will be putting Mr. Hyde on the client's other foot."



HAVE A GREAT HORROR TAT? SHARE IT WITH US AT: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM

THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX

HAMMER'S FRANKENSTEIN BODY MODS



1. **FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL (UNCUT)**
THE BARON'S MAKESHIFT MOUTH CLAMP
2. **FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL**
BLOODY BRAIN REMOVAL
3. **THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN**
SHOTGUN EYEBALL EVAPORATION
4. **EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN**
MONSTER STAKES MESMERIST
5. **FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL**
INMATES MAKE MINCEMEAT
6. **THE REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN**
KARL BURNS HIS FORMER BODY



TORTURED TAGLINES

TERROR TRAIN (1980)

THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF SIGMA PHI. SOME WILL LIVE. SOME WILL DIE.

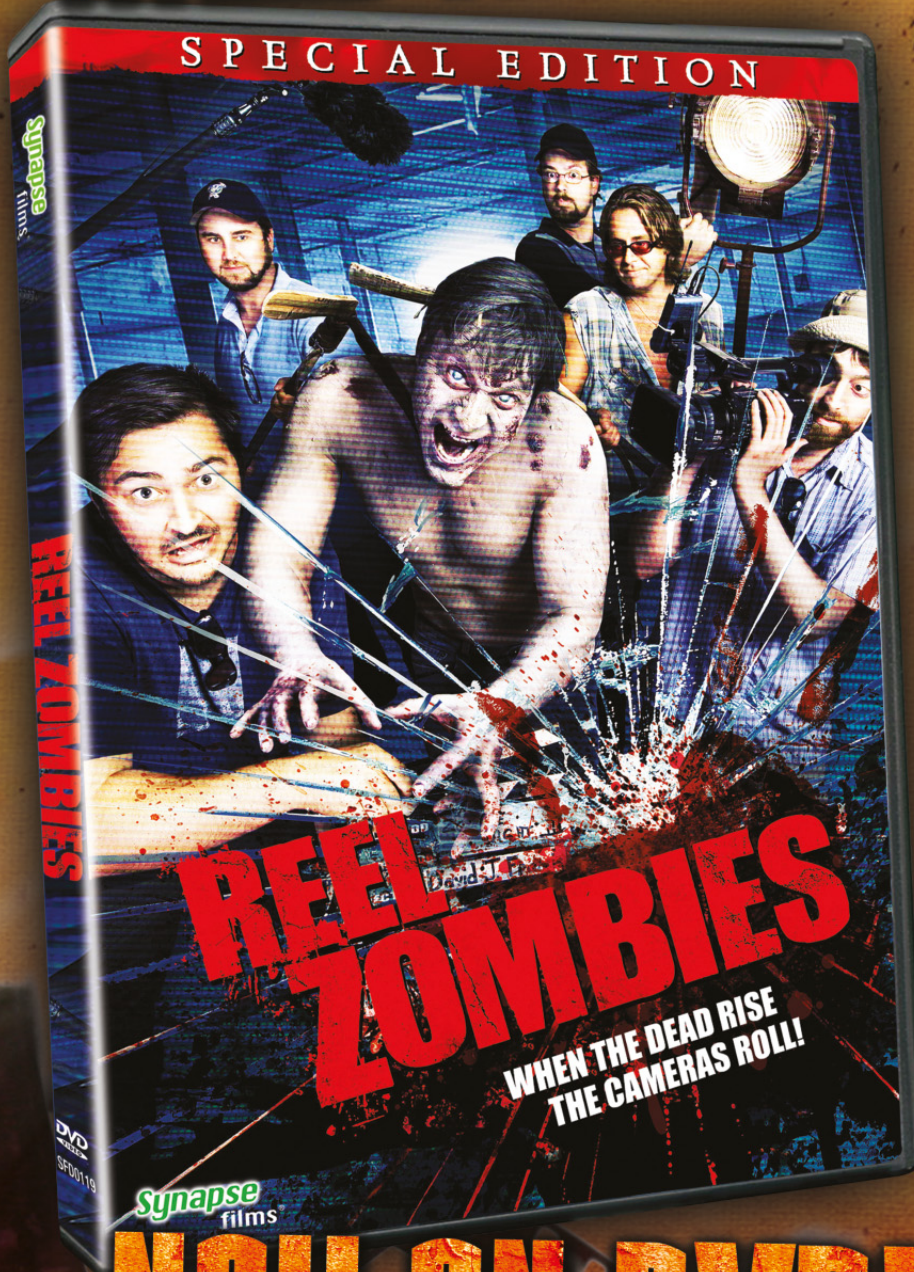
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NEEDFUL THINGS



1 PETER CUSHING BUST \$99.99

Titan Merchandise pays tribute to Hammer's first Frankenstein offering with this elegant bust of the doomed scientist himself, played by Peter Cushing in *The Curse of Frankenstein*. Eight inches tall, this highly detailed piece is a novel addition to your evil laboratory.

They're pushing Cushing at entertainmentearth.com.

2 "LOST" RETRO-STYLE ALIEN FIGURES \$14.99 (\$54.99 for the set)

These *Alien* action figures are based on designs for a series that was intended to be released back in the '70s when the movie first came out, but never actually saw the light of day. Now, Ripley, Ash, Dallas, Kane and the Xenomorph are resurrected in 3 3/4-inch retro glory, complete with wonderfully old-school packaging.

Make these priority one and pick 'em up at entertainmentearth.com.

3 GHOSTBUSTERS VENKMAN COSTUME JACKET \$69.99

No word on whether this version of Venkman's Ghostbuster jacket in a cotton-polyester blend is slime-resistant, but it will make ancient Sumerian deities think twice about stepping on churches in your town. And remember, when you're wearing it: if someone asks if you're a god, you say "yes."

Don't cross the streams at amazon.com.

4 SKULL CHAIR \$299.99

Skulls have been used for centuries in art to represent the meaninglessness of life and to emphasize the fleeting nature of happiness – such as when you're sitting on your deck, nursing a cold one late on a summer evening. Enjoy it while it lasts in a skull-carved chair from mywickedwood.com.



CRYPTIC
COLLECTIBLES

THE REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN TIE-IN NOVEL
(Panther Books, 1958)

This 1958 tie-in novelization was one of the earliest pieces of Hammer Films-related merchandise. It sees our mad doctor escaping the guillotine by striking a deal with a deformed prison guard named Karl, which would give the misshapen man a healthy new body. But the effects are short-lived when the Baron's new cre-

ation sustains a head injury, causing a regression to his former physical condition and an appetite for human flesh. Published in the UK by Panther Books, copies fetch upwards of \$60 online.

JAMES BURRELL

MORE CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES AT RUE-MORGUE.COM



All prices USD unless otherwise indicated.

LLOYD KAUFMAN AND MICHAEL HERZ PRESENT A TROMA TEAM PRODUCTION

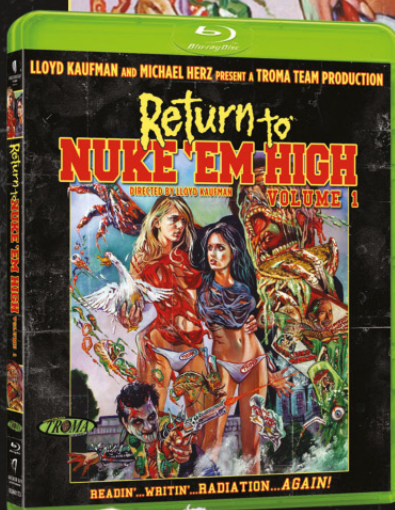
Return to NUKE 'EM HIGH

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FEATURING MUSIC BY MARTYN JAGUES PERFORMED BY THE TIGER LILLIES SCREENPLAY BY TRAVIS CAMPBELL DEREK DRESSLER LLOYD KAUFMAN PRODUCED BY REGINA KATZ ALEX GORDON RENE KRZOK ROGER TREVINO
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www.return2nukeemhigh.com

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FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL

IS VIEWED BY MANY AS
HAMMER'S LAST HURRAH.
40 YEARS LATER, WE ASK
IF IT WAS A GRAVESTONE
OR A SWAN SONG

RESURRECTED

HAVING EFFECTIVELY REDEFINED THE GENRE FOR AN ENTIRE GENERATION WITH SUCH TRIUMPHS AS *DRACULA* AND *THE DEVIL RIDES OUT*, IT'S EASY TO FORGET THAT TERENCE FISHER WAS 52 YEARS OLD BEFORE HE DIRECTED A HORROR MOVIE. After making his debut with the

farical 1947 fantasy *Colonel Bogey*, the bespectacled filmmaker would spend the next half decade helming nineteen (largely undistinguished) low-budget supporting features before joining Hammer Films in 1952. His big break came four years later when Hammer head Sir James Carreras announced that the next production on the studio's slate would be a new adaptation of *Frankenstein*.

Contracted to deliver one more picture for the company, Fisher nixed Carreras' suggestion that he should model his film on James Whale's 1931 version. Instead, the director mounted his own daring, blood-spattered take on Mary Shelley's classic novel – now rechristened *The Curse of Frankenstein* – launching Hammer's first colour gothic and changing the scarred face of horror cinema forever. Seventeen years later, in May 1974, the seventh installment in the misadventures of the amoral Baron Frankenstein and his destructive progeny (known simply as "the Monster") was released in theatres. *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* would not only

be Fisher's elegiac swan song after a remarkable career, it would also be Hammer's final Frankenstein film and mark the last time Peter Cushing would ever essay the titular role.

As shooting commenced on Stage 4 at Elstree Studios on September 10, 1972, it was obvious to all that both Fisher and Cushing were struggling, physically and mentally, although this never impeded their work. After a four-year period of inactivity in which he had been knocked down – twice – by cars and seriously injured, Fisher's confidence was deeply shaken, resulting in his having to be persuaded out of re-



BY
**MICHAEL
DOYLE**

tirement by producer Roy Skeggs. Michael Carreras – who had recently bought the company from his father – officially awarded the job of helming *FatMfH* to Fisher in a gesture that some have interpreted as the repaying of “a debt of honour” for the director’s many years of service. As for Cushing, he was still locked in a profoundly black depression after the death of his beloved wife, Helen, in January 1971.

Derived from Anthony Hinds’ final script for Hammer after he departed the company in the late 1960s, *FatMfH* is the story of Simon Helder (Shane Briant), a precocious young surgeon who is experimenting with the recently deceased. Arrested for the crime of sorcery, he’s sentenced to five years imprisonment at the Carlsbad Asylum for the Criminally Insane. Shortly after arriving, he meets Dr. Karl Victor (Peter Cushing), the resident physician who is being assisted by the beautiful Sarah (Madeleine Smith), a mute girl whom the inmates call “Angel.” Helder soon learns that Dr. Victor is in fact the notorious Baron Frankenstein who has been continuing his depraved experiments in a secret laboratory located deep within the dreary confines of the asylum under the auspices of the institution’s sleazy director (John Stratton).

Frankenstein has been using the corpses of the inmates for his research, including the homicidal, Neanderthal-like Schneider (David Prowse, best known for playing Darth Vader), whose hulking body forms the basis for his latest creation. Impressed by Helder’s medical skills, the Baron enlists him to perform the delicate surgeries required to bring the Monster to hideous life (as his own hands have been reduced to gnarled stumps after the fiery climax of *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed*). Together, they augment the creature with a new pair of eyes, as well as the hands of a sculptor (Bernard Lee) and the brain of the esteemed Professor Durendel (Charles Lloyd Pack) who, unbeknownst to Helder, has been secretly driven to suicide by Frankenstein. Despite their best efforts, soon after the Monster becomes conscious he descends into misery and rage, and begins cutting a murderous swath through the asylum.

Released between *The Exorcist* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (and according to some sources earning just £1,774 in its first week playing at the London Astoria), reaction to Fisher’s “quaint” film was mixed. To this day, *FatMfH* continues to divide



Hammer, Meet Saw: (from top) Baron Frankenstein (Peter Cushing) and his young assistant Simon Helder (Shane Briant) remove Professor Durendel's brain, and the tormented, mortally-wounded Monster (David Prowse) reaches out to Sarah (Madeline Smith).



Courtesy of Marcus Brooks, The UK Peter Cushing Appreciation Society

opinion, with some insisting that it stands as a stately monument to Hammer's past triumphs, while others view it as a tombstone for the company. Although it doesn't represent the pinnacle of Fisher's achievements (or indeed the Frankenstein cycle), *FatMiH* was one final flourish for the ailing director. As the 1970s – and his life – ebbed away, Fisher's oeuvre finally began receiving some overdue critical appreciation. Unfortunately, he did not live long enough to enjoy it. The man who had made virtues of impoverished budgets and tight shooting schedules – and in doing so had helped to cement Hammer's reputation and early commercial fortunes with a stunning array of unrivalled classics – died on June 18, 1980, at the age of 75.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of Fisher's parting gift (and the 110th anniversary of the terror titan's birth), *Rue Morgue* gathers together actors Briant, Smith and Prowse (see sidebar) as well as Denis Meikle, author of *A History of Horrors: The Rise and Fall of the House of Hammer*, to revisit the creation of a controversial classic.

How did you come to be cast in *FatMiH*?

SHANE BRIANT: I was doing a play that went to London's West End and during that play's run I was spotted by Michael Carreras. He wanted someone to play the lead role in *Straight on Till Morning* and he thought I would be ideal for it. Hammer asked if I would sign a two-year contract to do four films for them, so I was pretty lucky. They also needed a young assistant for Baron Frankenstein [in *FatMiH*] and looking back that was probably what they had in mind when they first put me under contract.

MADLINE SMITH: I had already appeared in two previous Hammer films – *Taste the Blood of Dracula*, at the end of 1968, and *The Vampire Lovers* in 1970. *FatMiH* came about two years later and by that time I'd really grown up a lot. I had played your typical victim in *The Vampire Lovers*, which was rather a muted part, and now in *FatMiH* I was playing an actual mute. That suited me fine because I had this terribly squeaky voice back then, so it was a jolly good thing that I wasn't required to say anything! [Laughs] Let's be honest, as an actress in a Hammer film you were merely required to decorate the place, and how very flattering that is. I had no problem just standing there looking lovely, because

that was all that was expected of me. All the action in *FatMiH* was given to Peter and Shane.

Denis, what was the state of Terence Fisher's career and health before he embarked on *FatMiH*?

DENIS MEIKLE: Fisher's career was effectively over and his health was not good. He was 68 when he made *FatMiH*, frail, and he walked with a stick after breaking the same leg twice in the years immediately prior. When I met him at the press screening for the film, he was still mentally lively but physically very weak. His last hurrah for Hammer was actually *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed*. *FatMiH* was a gothic too far.

What are your memories of working with Peter Cushing?

SB: Peter was the ultimate, consummate professional. He had been around a long time and those sorts of old-fashioned English actors don't exist anymore. He was very kind to me and showed me all sorts of things. I was like an apprentice watching him work on set.

MS: Peter was a gentleman in every sense of the word. He never hid the fact that he appeared in Hammer horror films, even though they were considered the B-pictures of their era. Some actors looked down at these films, but Peter never did. He was always glad for the work and was a very malleable actor who could turn his hand to anything. When we were making *FatMiH*, Peter was quite a tragic figure. He'd recently lost his wife and in his grief wasn't really eating anything. He only drank black coffee and looked like a skeleton. I actually believe that he was starving himself to death. Peter was in the pits of despair at the time and I didn't really say

more than a few words to him. He was totally caught up with his own emotions or was huddled somewhere in a corner with Shane working out every scene in his almost scientific manner.

What do you remember about the special effects used in the film?

MS: We never shot anything more than once or twice, not only because of time and money, but due to the disgusting stuff we used for the special effects. When you are messing about with blood and guts, all of that muck has to be cleaned off the set before you can do another take. I can remember shooting the scene where the asylum inmates tear the Monster apart at the end and that was a terrible mess! The film was shot on a closed set at Elstree – always the same old set every day – and it got really dingy. There was so much blood, entrails, pigs' eyes and other awful things being thrown about that everything became rather grimy and smelly.

SB: In those days I seem to remember that for the close-ups we used to use real human blood, which was out of date so the blood banks no longer wanted it. It would be in those transfusion packs and I remember thinking that was really creepy. It wouldn't be used for the scenes where there would be blood sprayed against a wall – that was Kensington Gore – but for some of the other stuff like taking the back of the Professor's head off or sawing through a body or an arm – they would use the real stuff. The art department would come on set with the flat-packs of blood, cut them open and then pour actual human blood all over the place. That really creeped me out! [Laughs] It was very grim.

That would be unheard of today. Just how grim did it get?

SB: In the scene where the genius' brain is being removed and placed in the Monster's head we had a little incident. The brain was actually a sheep's brain and we were originally going to shoot that on a Friday afternoon. Then we got into a problem with one of the scenes and never got around to doing it. Unfortunately, the art department had sealed the sheep's brain inside the prosthetic head and it had taken so long to do that they didn't want to open it back up and take the brain out. Of course, they forgot to store it in the fridge. We finally did the scene on Monday morning and the cameras started rolling as Peter and I were hovering over the head. As they were filming, I cut into the head, carefully lifted the cranium off the top, and the smell of the putrefying sheep's brain – which had been in the hot art department for two days – suddenly hit me. It was unbelievably disgusting! I thought I was going to be sick but Peter, being the old pro that he was, used it and smiled. He didn't flinch and had a look of complete and utter relish on his face. If you look at that scene hopefully you won't notice that I almost puked, but the very moment that somebody yelled "cut" everyone turned around and fled! The brain was then put in a bag and was never seen again.

What is your opinion of the makeup job on David Prowse's Monster?

MS: The Monster was one instance where the producers could have gone a little over budget, actually. I thought the makeup on Dave wasn't great and veered dangerously into the comical.

SB: I remember we were doing some makeup tests and I was having my hair bleached blonde for the role. The door opened and in Dave came wearing the full Monster suit because he wanted to see what the reaction would be. I took one look at his costume and thought it looked too much like a plastic cast. In those days, instead of having things put onto your skin, which actually moved freely, it was like wearing a mask or helmet so the sound had to be done at a later stage. All I could hear was Dave saying, [muffles mouth with hand] "Shane, what do you think of the costume?" Instead of giving him the truth, I should

have gone, "My God, Dave, that's fantastic! You're so scary, it's wonderful!" I was utterly transfixed by the suit because I thought it wasn't terribly good. In fact, it was awful. I was desperately trying to think of something I could possibly tell him that would be positive. So I looked at the head and thought, no, it looks like a ridiculous mask. I then looked at the hairy body and thought it looked completely fake and rubbery. I looked at the hands and they actually looked better than the rest of the costume, but then finally I looked down at the feet and they looked pretty damn good. I said, "The suit looks terrific, Dave, but to tell you the truth the best bits are the hands and the feet." He sank with obvious disappointment and said, "Oh my God, they are the only bits that are me!" [Laughs] I mean, he had these huge hands and feet and they just looked horrible! He wasn't very happy about that.

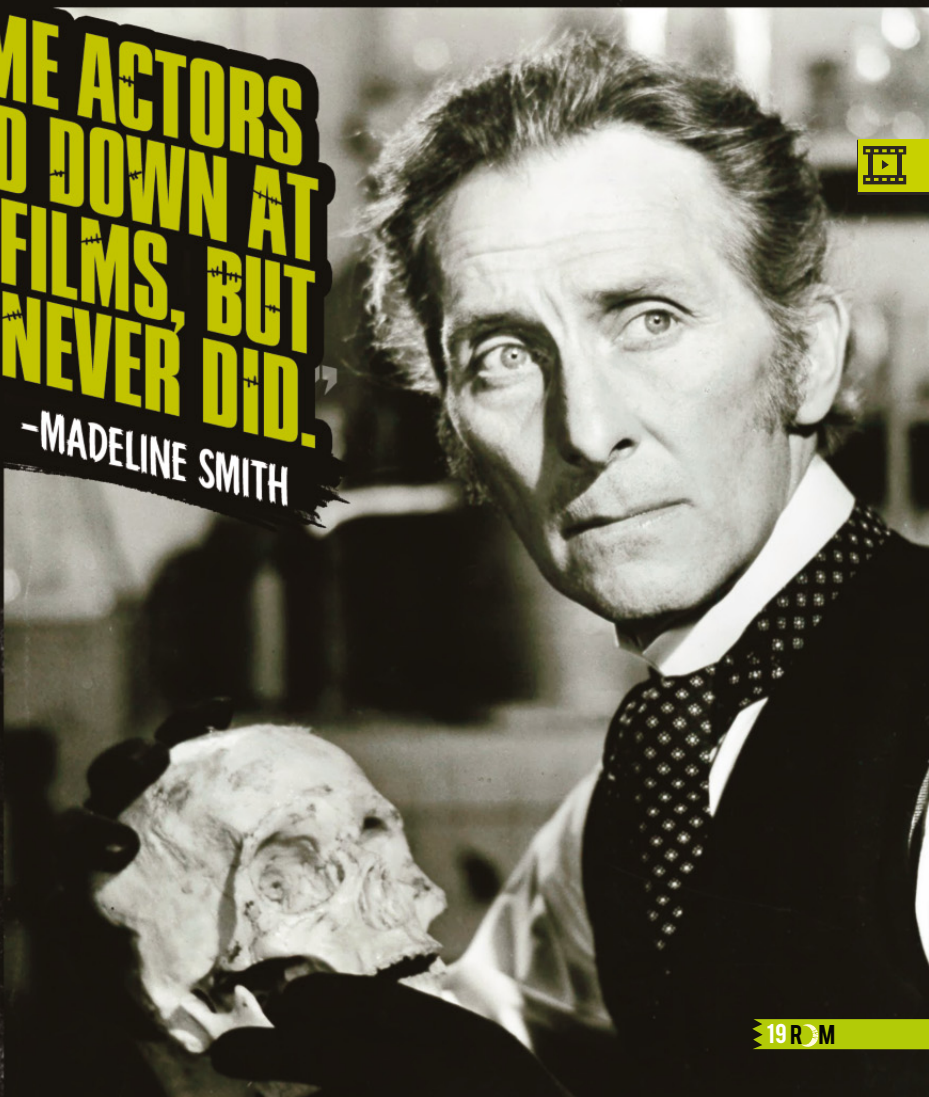
Some of the gore effects in *FatMfH* were heavily cut for the American release. Did you think it was excessively gory?

MS: Actually, my daughter saw the film several years ago and found it nauseating, but of course that was the whole point. One or two moments were probably a little too strong for the time and I understand that Americans didn't like excessive gore back then. I think their attitude has changed enormously today. If you watch American horror films now, you'll find they are much worse than *FatMfH*. I've always been led to believe that most of the gore in Hammer films was actually done for the Japanese market as they like everything to be full-on – the sex, the violence, everything!

DM: All the gore in Hammer's films was being cut for the American market in the early '70s in a complete reversal of the situation a decade earlier when the gore was cut in the UK, but allowed to go out under a G rating in the States. It wasn't so much the gore as the sex that the US objected to; its puritanical stance on matters of sex and violence onscreen invariably being the exact opposite to that of the UK.

An infamous moment excised from most prints occurs when Helder and Frankenstein are stitching the Monster together in the laboratory, and the Baron clamps an artery with his teeth before swilling the blood from his mouth.

**SOME ACTORS
LOOKED DOWN AT
THESE FILMS, BUT
PETER NEVER DID.**
—MADELINE SMITH



SB: Peter was always coming up with those sorts of wonderful ideas just to be different. I think that is what made him so good and that's the thing we remember even now, all these years later. ... Peter said, "Well, how about if I hold onto this [artery] with my teeth?" Terry would say excitedly, "Oh, yes, how wonderful! That's a terrific idea, Peter!" He would be grinning from ear to ear. Terry was grinning all the way through shooting that scene. He'd clap his hands together and go, "Oh, that's just sooooo naughty! That's just so over-the-top and wonderful! Well done!" He was a very happy man and I think when he was working that is what made his life worthwhile.

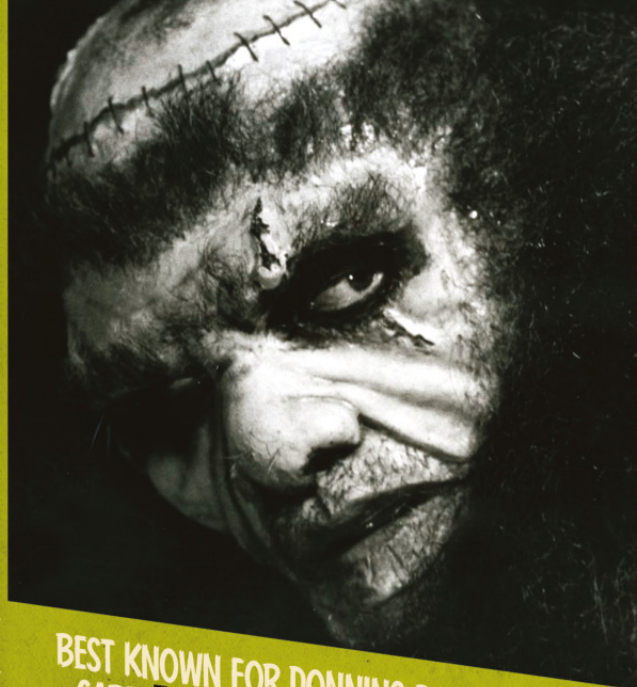
Some critics suggest that younger directors such as Peter Sykes, Peter Collinson and Peter Sasdy were trying to make more "progressive" films that would re-energize Hammer by building on the traditions established by Fisher. Do you think this is true?

SB: No, I don't think so. I just remember that everybody was trying to make really good pictures. In a way, I think it was probably not the best idea at the time to go away from the gothic horror that Hammer was famous for. People went to the cinema to see a Hammer horror film and what they expected were vampires and werewolves but what they got was *Straight on Till Morning*. That film was something completely different and was "kitchen sink horror." It wasn't a typical Hammer film, and although some people do like it, I think they much prefer vampires, werewolves and Franksteins. To that extent, the departure wasn't as great a success as they hoped it would be and led them to quickly go back to *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*.

DM: Collinson's film [*Straight on Till Morning*] was a commercial disaster, as were both of Sykes' [*Demons of the Mind*, *To the Devil a Daughter*]. Sasdy was a TV director and his style was far removed from that of Fisher, Freddie Francis or Don Sharp, although he came closest of the three to the classic Hammer approach. But none of these later directors were really in tune with the Hammer ethos as established by Fisher and others. The so-called "progressive" films they tried to make helped to kill the company, not re-energize it.

How did the top brass at Hammer feel about *FatMiH*?

DM: Trying to reclaim the high ground of horror with a gothic fable two months after *The Exorcist* opened in Britain was always doomed to fail, but Hammer was running out of ideas by then and *FatMiH* was an example of that. No one could have been happy with a cheap, old-fashioned period horror in a day when sex and violence in films had reached unprecedented levels of explicitness. Michael Carreras signed off on this because it was one of the only projects for which he could raise financing at the time.



BEST KNOWN FOR DONNING DARTH VADER'S CAPE, DAVID PROWSE REALLY RELISHES HIS TURN AS THE CREATURE IN **FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL**

THE HULK OF HAMMER

BY MICHAEL DOYLE

WHEN DAVID PROWSE FIRST STARTED ACTING HE COULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED ATTAINING THE LOFTY POSITION HE NOW ENJOYS IN THE HALLOWED ANNALS OF GENRE FILM HISTORY.

Within a decade of making his movie debut (as a Karloff-like "Frankenstein's Creature" in the 1967 spy spoof *Casino Royale*), the bodybuilder and former competitive weightlifter would go on to sport the helmet and cape of Darth Vader – cinema's greatest villain – in the original *Star Wars* trilogy, and become the only actor ever to play the Monster in two of Hammer's celebrated *Frankenstein* series.

Standing at an imposing six feet six inches and weighing more than 270 lbs, Prowse's muscular physique inevitably led to a succession of "big roles" as a bodyguard, strongman and minotaur in *A Clockwork Orange*, *Vampire Circus* and *Doctor Who*, respectively. Two years after playing Ralph Bates' staple-headed creation in *Horror of Frankenstein*, Prowse was cast as the hirsute Neolithic throwback in *Frankenstein and the Monster from*

Baron Of Blood: One of the film's most-censored scenes features Baron Frankenstein clamping an artery with his teeth.

Hell. On this occasion, he would be rendered utterly unrecognizable by makeup artist Eddie Knight (*The Devil Rides Out*).

"The script called for a more animal-like Monster than in previous *Frankenstein* films, but there was very little makeup required for the part," reveals Prowse, now 78. "They put some on my hands to make them look scarred, but it was mostly done with a mask that slipped over my head. There was some black makeup put around my eyes, but that was it. The Monster's body was built-up on a tight-fitting wetsuit and I simply climbed inside and zipped it up. The whole process was easy compared to when I'd played the Monster in *Horror of Frankenstein*. That film involved a major makeup session – two hours every day to fit the headpiece on and everything – but on *FatMfH* I just walked in and the job was finished in under 30 minutes."

Despite having to project through a thick layer of rubber, Prowse was ecstatic at the prospect of sharing the screen with Peter Cushing. Meeting the legendary actor for the first time, he was delighted to discover that Cushing was more than deserving of his reputation as the Gentleman of Horror.

"Peter was a lovely man and we got to be quite pally after finishing the film," Prowse recalls. "He lived in the seaside town of Whitstable and I would visit him there occasionally. After his wife died, Peter was naturally very depressed. He used to sit for hours on a special seat they'd made for him down on the coast. He'd quietly watch the boats go up and down the estuary, no doubt thinking about his wife. A few years after *FatMfH*, Peter and I re-teamed as the bad guys on *Star Wars* and it was wonderful to be working so closely with him again."

Throughout the shooting of *FatMfH*, Prowse was impressed by the aging thespian's willingness to put his own frail body on the line when required. This was never more apparent than during the energetic scene where Frankenstein attempts to incapacitate the Monster as he rampages through his laboratory.

"Peter climbed onto a table and then suddenly leapt on my back," he explains. "Peter did that himself – nobody doubled for him. He just launched himself at me and I had to sort of gallivant around the room, trying to shake him off. We then had to slump down to the floor as the Monster lost consciousness and I remember Peter just clinging to my shoulders like grim death. Considering his age and health at the time, he performed that very physical stunt without a moment's hesitation."

Prowse considers himself equally blessed to have worked with another Hammer legend, the inimitable Terence Fisher, whom he exalts as "the doyen" of horror filmmakers.

"Terence is the greatest director of them all," he states. "I'd worked with Jimmy Sangster on *Horror of Frankenstein* and Robert Young on *Vampire Circus*, and they were both excellent, but Terence was something special. He was meticulous about making every scene work, but communicated his ideas clearly and patiently – and not every director can do that. Unfortunately, Terence wasn't in the best of health and was getting close to the end of his life. Perhaps he knew it too, because he seemed



Courtesy of Marcus Brooks, The UK Peter Cushing Appreciation Society

Built To Kill: (from top) Prowse – in full Monster costume – strikes a pose on the asylum graveyard set at Elstree Studios, and Dr. Frankenstein attempts to subdue the rampaging Monster.

to relish every moment on set."

Refuting accusations that *FatMfH* was a violent film for its time, Prowse instead describes it as a "traditional Hammer picture" sprinkled with "two or three harmless nasty bits." The BBFC evidently disagreed, awarding the film an X certificate and insisting that cuts be made to the scene where the Monster viciously stabs the asylum director in the throat with broken glass. In their official report, the censors also condemned the climactic sequence where Carlsbad's ravenous inmates "tear gobbets of flesh" out of the Monster, "eat them [and] paddle about in his blood." Despite these contentions, Prowse maintains that shooting his death scene was a blast.

"When all those actors playing the mental patients jumped on me, it was a little like every man for himself!" he chuckles. "After I'm ripped apart, you see people walking away carrying bloody bits and scraps of the Monster and I think Terence even has a shot of one girl trying to feed a piece of me

to her doll. As grisly as that might look on film there's still an element of humour involved, and it was quite funny shooting that stuff."

Prowse considers Fisher's divisive classic to be that rare beast in horror cinema: a scary movie with an emotionally complex monster. For this reason and others, he has no scruples in declaring the role his all-time favourite.

"I have a strong attachment to the *Monster from Hell*, because the character has this poignant mix of sadness and rage. Sometimes I find this hard to put into words, but it's a special part for me. I've done lots of films and occasionally you finish a movie and think, 'Well, that was okay, I enjoyed the experience.' But rarely do you believe that you've done something really good, and on *FatMfH* – more than any other film I've done, and that includes the *Star Wars* movies – I came away believing I'd done a great job. Darth Vader was an incredible part to play, but I didn't get any more satisfaction from that role than when I played the Monster." 🐼

SOUL SURVIVOR

FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN (1967) Blu-ray

Starring Peter Cushing, Susan Denberg and Thorley Walters
Directed by Terence Fisher
Written by John Elder (as Anthony Hinds)
Millennium Entertainment

After several ill-fated attempts at restoring life to the dead, Peter Cushing's Baron Frankenstein returns to the laboratory to craft a new, and at first, seemingly perfect creation in one of Hammer Films' most interesting efforts: 1967's *Frankenstein Created Woman*. The fourth chapter in the studio's Frankenstein saga, the film sees the scientist construct an apparatus that has the ability to isolate the soul of a person after death and keep it suspended inside the machine until it can rejoin a repaired body.

It isn't long before the Baron puts his equipment to use when his youthful assistant Hans (Robert Morris) is framed and executed for a murder he didn't commit, and the young man's grieving lover – the horribly scarred Christina (Susan Denberg) – commits suicide. But though the procedure initially seems to be a success, Christina, now transformed into a stunning, blonde-haired beauty, harbours not only Hans' tortured soul as well as her own, but also his thirst for revenge against the three wealthy thugs who committed the crime.

The film (the title a play on director Roger Vadim's 1956 film *And God Created Woman*) is one of Hammer's more unusual releases, not only because of the uniqueness of the film's "monster" – who is in effect both male and female – but also in that it manages to enter into the realm of metaphysics by emphasizing that the soul (depicted as a glowing orb), rather than the mind, is what makes people who they are.

Cushing is at his icy best here, and his black gloves – presumably to hide the burns his character suffered at the end of the previous entry, *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964) – provide a sinister, yet elegant touch, while Denberg, whose voice was dubbed because of her strong German accent, generates a good deal of pathos as Christina.

Making its North American Blu-ray debut, Millennium Entertainment's release sports a remastered, high-definition transfer and includes numerous extras, including a commentary with Morris and Derek Fowlds (who played one of the murderers); a featurette on Hammer actresses titled *Hammer Glamour*; two episodes from the early-'90s UK TV series *World of Hammer*; and a stills gallery. If you're a Cushing or Hammer fan, this one's really going to give you a jolt.

JAMES BURRELL



Meet Your Maker:
Director Terence Fisher on set with the cast.

I ALWAYS THINK OF TERENCE'S FINAL FILM AS BEING LIKE A FUNERAL POEM, A GLORIOUS LITTLE CODA AT THE END.

—MADELINE SMITH

Opinion is clearly divided over *FatMiH*. Some view it as the last great Hammer picture, whilst others believe it sounded the death knell for the company.

SB: I don't think it sounded the death knell. The film was very well received and was a typical Frankenstein movie, which was what everyone who went to a Hammer film wanted to see. Peter was spectacular – as always – and it did very well in America and around the world. People still remember *FatMiH* to this very day, which can't be said for a lot of the horror films that were made at that time. If you look at *The Mummy's Shroud* and *Lust for a Vampire* and a lot of others, they are pretty awful, but I don't think this film was. I've always considered *FatMiH* to be one of the classics. In fact, as far as I'm concerned, Simon Helder was the best of the roles I did for Hammer.

DM: It's a pale shadow of its forerunners; nicely staged, well acted for the most part and efficiently packaged – all as might be expected from the combined talents of Fisher and Cushing. But there's no passion to it and no dramatic tension. It's almost pastiche Hammer – a homage put together by someone else from the familiar ingredients and constructed to look like Hammer. Tony Hinds' "John Elder" script would still have seemed dated had it been made ten years before, and Fisher's pacing was that of a retiree – slack and stately. It's a nice film, but it's classic Hammer only to those who never saw it in release and fondly imagine it on the big screen as though it were part of a time to which it never actually belonged. In fact, *FatMiH* is the perfect example of "Hammer in hindsight"; it looks far better now than it ever did in its day.

MS: By the time I did *The Vampire Lovers*, Hammer was doing lesbian vampires and full-frontal nudity and that really was the end. Roy Ward Baker actually kept that film nicely reined-in, but certain people wanted it to be far more explicit. In fact, I was

amazed at the complete absence of sex in *FatMiH*. In my opinion, it all began going wrong in the early '70s, before Terence's film. At the same time the censors began releasing their grip, some American company – possibly American International – joined up with Hammer in order to "save it" because audiences weren't going to see their films anymore. They now wanted more sex, and arguments were going on about this between various people. Soon after that, Hammer began producing more sexually explicit films like *Lust for a Vampire* and god knows what else. That's when Hammer lost their quality because they were then going for semi-porno, really.

How would you describe Fisher's Hammer legacy?

DM: Fisher had staked his claim with *Dracula*. For that and *Brides of Dracula*, and the late entries of *The Devil Rides Out* and *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed*, he will always rank among the greats – not so much because of any individual style, but because he was one of those who helped to create the modern horror film. He was one of the pioneers; the first of the few. *Dracula* is one of the all-time great horror films, but Fisher was only one part of the team that made it possible. He was not an auteur, but his feel for the period horror films that collectively came to be recognized as Hammer Gothic was second to none.

MS: Terence made wonderful horror films – many of which are classics. For some extraordinary reason, in the middle of Hammer's sad decline, we have the little gem that is *FatMiH*. In a way that picture is almost like an apology at the end of Hammer's life, saying, "This is what we're really about. We are a quality company and this is what we want to be remembered for." I always think of Terence's final film as being like a funeral poem, a glorious little coda at the end. ☠

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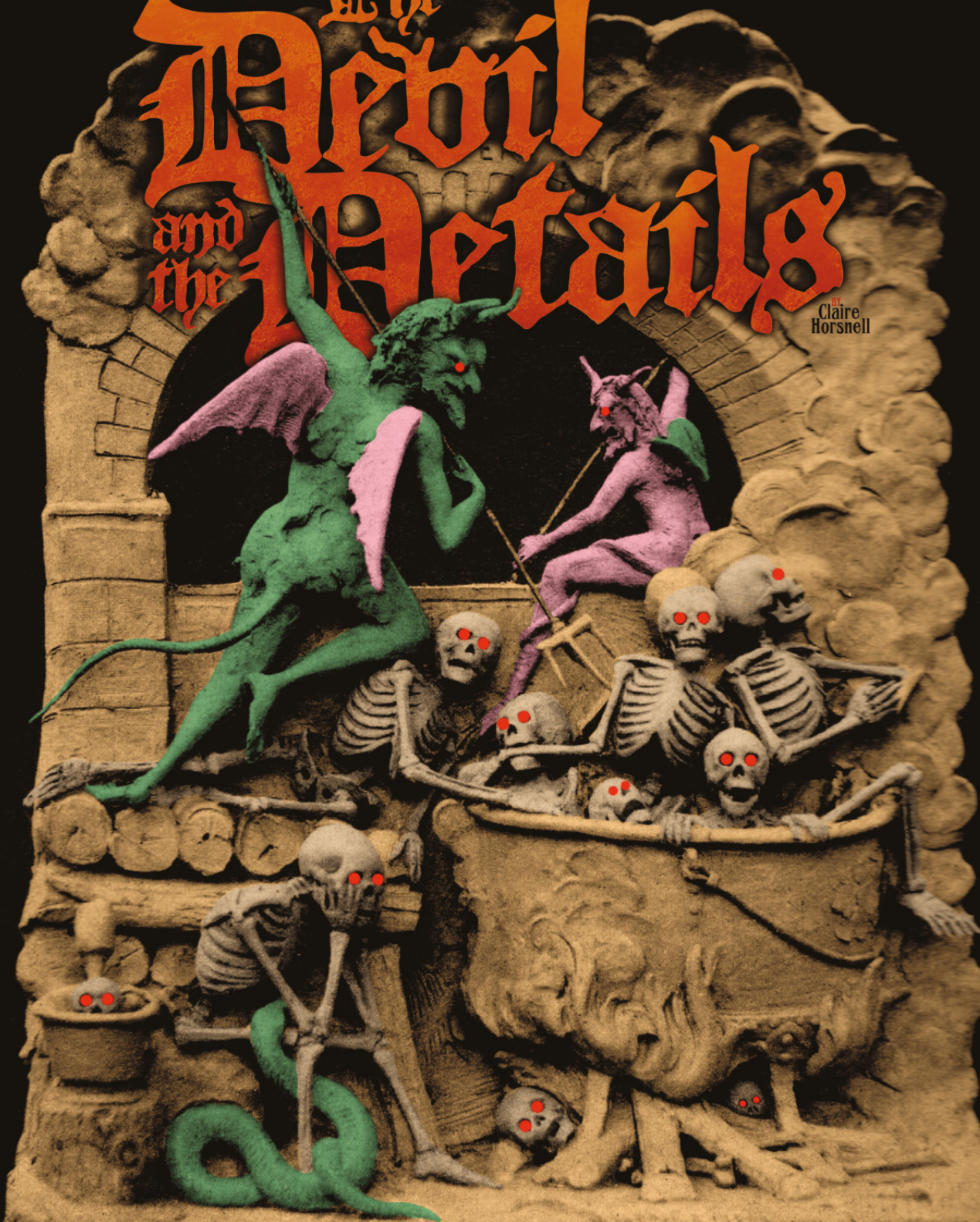
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DIABLERIES: STEROSCOPIC ADVENTURES IN HELL

The Devil and the Details

by
Claire
Horsnell



II HE DEVIL IS A BUSY CHAP. WHEN HE'S NOT TORTURING THE DAMNED IN HELL OR SEEKING MORE SOULS TO ADD TO HIS COLLECTION, HE CAN BE FOUND ENJOYING A DAY AT THE RACES OR A NIGHT AT THE OPERA. ATTENDING A BLACK MASS AND EVEN SPECULATING ON THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

He even makes the time to run a photographic emporium, visit the theatre and get married – at least, according to a new book, *Diableries: Stereoscopic Adventures in Hell*. The weighty hardcover represents a remarkable collaboration between three diverse authors – Queen guitarist Brian May, photography scholar Denis Pellerin and photographic historian Paula Fleming – who all share a long-standing interest in stereoscopic photography, but it's also a unique project that showcases what may be the origin of 3-D technology in horror.

The *diableries* (the French word literally means “devilments”) are stereoscopic photographs that were produced and sold as cards in France between the mid-1860s and the 1890s. Stereoscopic photography involves photographing the same image twice from slightly different angles; the photographs are then placed side by side and viewed through a stereoscope in order to create the illusion of depth, creating a three-dimensional image. Stereo cards were a popular form of entertainment in Europe, as well as a means to communicate and share ideas.

Or, alternatively, to scare the populace into sheer, heart attack-inducing panic by confronting them with the torments they would face after death if they sinned. The first diableries were created by a young artist named Pierre Adolph Henrietier, who sculpted clay models featuring such biblical standards as the Last Judgement, Hell and Purgatory, in which the damned appear as living skeletons. The models were then not only photographed in stereo, but also jazzed up with the application of hand-tinted ink highlights.

The end result: when the card is held up to the light and viewed through a stereoscopic viewer, the Devil, Hell and the damned spring into three dimensions and glow in bright, eerie colours. The effect is still stunning today; in an age before cinema, TV and mass media, it must have seemed like a kind of magic.

May first encountered the fiendish photographs in the

late-1960s in the famous antiques market in London's Portobello Road. Already, in his words, “obsessed with all things stereoscopic,” he was browsing the stalls one cold morning when a vendor showed him a set of cards featuring skeletons.

“I was blown away by the themes and the execution ... the modelling and composition,” he says. “But most of all there was a thrilling mystery to these groups of very-much-alive skeletons – a whole world of fantasy, but obviously [one] with deep undertones which mostly were only dimly comprehensible to me at the time.” He began fervently collecting the cards, and in only a few years assembled a near-complete run.

Fleming, a photographic historian and former photo archivist at the Smithsonian Museum, acquired her first diablerie card in the early 1990s and contacted May in 2004 to discuss their shared interest.

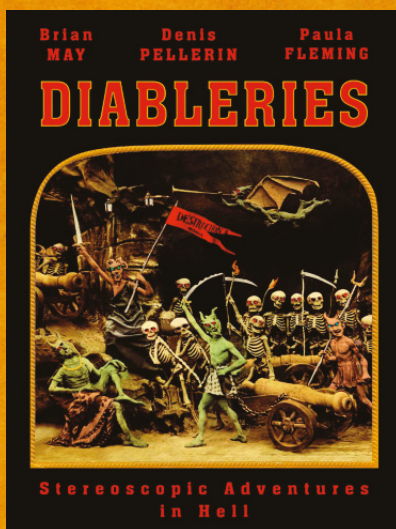
“The collector's inevitable verbal gauntlet, ‘I bet I have more – fill in the blank – than you do,’ was thrown down,” she recalls. “In this case it was diableries. Over several visits we realized that between the two of us we had nearly all of them, and mused about how much fun it would be to do a book.” The game was afoot.

Fleming was already familiar with the academic work of Pellerin, and when she discovered that he was another major collector of diableries, she and May set about tracking him down in France – a process that took over a year.

“So many of the inner meanings are now, thanks to Mr. Pellerin's unique research, revealed for the first time,” acknowledges May. Pellerin thus became the third member of Team Diableries.

“After talking to him for only a few minutes, I realized that what we ‘knew’ about diableries didn't amount to much,” says Fleming. “Writing a book with two authors can be tricky – three even more so, but in our case, it was a dream team, with everyone's talents meshing beautifully. Brian had a vision for the entire book and was fanatical about creating as perfect an example as he could of each and every view. Denis, who had done most of the scholarship and was a beautiful writer, created the first drafts. I, being detail-oriented and a natural editor, then edited down his drafts to our word limit.” (She refers to the division of labour, humorously, as “Rock, paper and scissors.”)

The book begins by showcasing Henrietier's frightening first images, but as it progresses, a clear shift is perceptible in the subject matter. Henrietier partnered up



with another talented artist, Louis Alfred Habert, shortly after the initial cards were published and, encouraged by his first publisher, François Benjamin Lamiche, the pair began to expand and experiment with their imagery.

"[Henriet's] vision of Hell and of the Temptation and Miseries of Saint Anthony was in keeping with the beliefs of his time," says Pellerin, adding that Henriet's publisher, on the other hand, was much less conventional. "Lamiche was some sort of a rebel, and he was also a Republican – not in the American sense of the word but in the French one, i.e., he believed that an elected president was better than a monarch and that elected MPs were better than courtiers. Lamiche

hated Emperor [Louis] Napoléon III because he had been the first president of France and had eventually staged a coup that had made him Emperor."

Pellerin believes that Lamiche may have been responsible for the introduction of political satire and innuendo into the diableries – a rather dangerous move. Cards such as "*Les femmes de Satan au bain*" ("Satan's Women Bathing") send up the emperor's propensity for womanizing by showing the diabolic beauties in a location featuring landmarks similar to those found in Biarritz, where the emperor's wife had a retreat. "*Fonderies de Satan*" ("Satan's Foundries"), depicting the skeletal denizens of Hell busily creating weapons and preparing for war, attacks the emperor's hypocrisy in proclaiming that the empire was in favour of peace shortly before hundreds of thou-

sands of soldiers perished in the Crimean War. Such subversion was highly risky: Fleming points out that Napoléon had reintroduced censorship to France at about the same time that the first diableries were published.

"He effectively controlled all media that was written, spoken, drawn, and eventually photographed," she says. "Anything that was to

be published had to be registered with the police regardless of the subject matter. If something was considered subversive or immoral, publication was not permitted. If something was published without being registered the creator could be jailed."

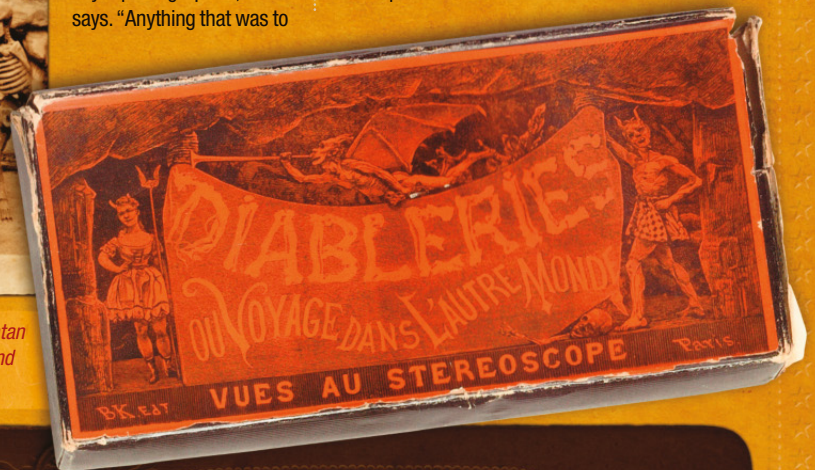
Lamiche had, in fact, already spent some time in prison for publishing stereo cards of a rather saucier nature, but Pellerin argues that Lamiche likely felt that the risk was worth it in order to defend his political beliefs. "Lots of journalists and cartoonists were thinking along the same lines and several of them did actually go to prison on account of their beliefs and of the opinions they defended through their articles and caricatures," he explains.

All of this begs the question of how the satanic

cards managed to get published at all in the repressive climate of the regime. "*Un souper chez Satan*" ("Supper at Satan's," pictured right) even depicts Satan presiding over a light meal of bread, fish and wine – a potentially blasphemous evocation of the story of the wedding at Cana, from the Gospel of St. John, in which Christ turns water into wine, and then manages a similar marvel with loaves and fish. Fleming, however, points out that the cards' early origins in religion may be one possible reason for their continued publication.



Wears No Clothes: Both "*Fonderies de Satan*" and "*Les Femmes de Satan au Bain*" criticize Emperor Napoléon III's penchant for war mongering and womanizing, respectively, and (inset) the cards' packaging.





"We think they were approved by the censors because they were submitted for review in the middle of a stack of benign images and just got approved as a group," she says.

In spite of the cards' satirical nature, the emperor isn't the only one whose dignity suffers the wit of the artists and photographers of the diableries. Old Scratch himself morphs throughout the series from the ultimate evil and adversary of God into a much more comic figure. Pellerin points to the increasingly educated population and the development of print culture as a possible explanation for the shift in perspective; news of the world's development through evolution rather than by creation, as detailed in Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, shocked people by calling the Bible into question — very effectively.

"Since it was clear that the Bible was not always right about the world, its creation and evolution, chances were that it was not right either about Hell

**THERE WAS A
THRILLING MYSTERY TO
THESE GROUPS OF
VERY-MUCH-ALIVE
SKELETONS.**

— Brian May

and the Devil," he says. "People might also have started to be fed up with this boogeyman and the vision of Hell given by the Church. Now, the best way to get rid of your fears is probably to make fun of them, which they did with the Devil."

Stories and plays featuring the Evil One began to depict him as an entity that could, with a degree of wit and common sense, be outsmarted.

"Their authors became bolder and bolder until the Devil became some sort of comic character or, occasionally, a good egg who was more stupid than really mean," says Pellerin. "Once this trend started, it spread quickly because it made people feel less frightened and gave them more hope for the afterlife."

Even so, the way that Hades appears in most of the diableries would provide a degree of comfort to the most unrepentant of sinners; it really does seem as though its inhabitants are having enormous fun. There are concerts, regattas and theatres; the damned can be seen enjoying banquets (including generous quantities of wine, if the postures of some of them are any indication), bicycle racing and ice skating. Even Hell's torments aren't to be taken too seriously: the analysis that accompanies the image "*La torture en enfer*" ("Torture in Hell," see p.25) points out that one tormented soul apparently being force-fed is actually drinking from a container marked "champagne," while even the skeletons who are being roasted, hanged and

decapitated are grinning much more cheerfully than one might expect. It's not so much a hot space of horror as an exuberant celebration of all the worldly pleasures that the damned presumably enjoyed in life.

All the images in the book can be enjoyed in their intended three-dimensional glory thanks to the inclusion of a stereoscopic viewer called the "OWL" (due to its distinctive shape). The OWL was designed by May, who studied physics before forming Queen in the early 1970s. He began working on the viewer for his first book on stereoscopic photography, *A Village Lost and Found*, and made only a few modifications to make it

perhaps my all-time favourite is '*Le diable enlevant les infidèles*' – 'The Devil Harvesting the Unfaithful' [pictured below]. This view has it all. The theme is powerful, and the imagination that has gone into staging it is breathtaking."

The image shows Satan and a team of skeletal helpers in a flying chariot soaring over Paris, picking up sinners with a nasty-looking hook and hurling them into a basket carried alongside them by a flying demonic creature. It's definitely one of the more sinister diableries in the collection.

"The composition seems to break the walls in every dimension, and the actual figuring of the characters – a mixture of diabolical and human – is uncannily life-

else. The sculptures were made only for temporary use, not as pieces of art. The same can be said of modern claymation projects: once the scene has been photographed, it is destroyed."

In fact, when the collection is viewed as a whole, as in the book, astute viewers can spot elements of models, such as the infernal stock of bicycles, that have obviously been reused from previous cards. Fleming also points to the fact that, in several of the photographs, cracks can be seen in the clay models, including in the image of the trumpeter on the book's cover, as evidence of their brittleness.

"The fragile nature of the originals, plus the impact of several wars, makes it almost impossible that any still exist," she says. "Still, we live in hope that one might turn up – perhaps as the result of this book being published."

In the meantime, however, the fact that the cards are available to a wider audience for the first time is something for fans of the macabre to celebrate.

"It's the fulfillment of a big dream to now have the book out there with the whole series reproduced at top quality," says May. "The world can now share the thrill."

Somewhere in his Hell of earthly joys, Satan is smiling. 😊

THE BEST WAY TO GET RID OF YOUR FEARS IS PROBABLY TO MAKE FUN OF THEM, WHICH THEY DID WITH THE DEVIL. • Denis Hellerin

work with *Diableries*.

"There simply was no suitable high quality stereoscopic viewer available at any price which would give our readers the immersive 3-D experience that the Victorians would have enjoyed. So I had to invent one!" he says. "I wanted a viewer which would be fully focusing, to accommodate all kinds of different eyesight qualities in our readers. I wanted it to fold flat to a thickness of only three millimetres so it could be packaged with the book in a way which would ensure that nobody got a book without the means to unlock its magic."

He's hard pressed to name his favourite image from the collection, though. "It's hard to choose. There are so many wonders," he says. "But I have a great fondness for the 'Baroque' style which Henrietier developed after he left the company of Block [another publisher of diableries] and his colleague Habert. So

like," points out May. "The whole scene is unforgettable, and contains many mysteries all rolled into one colossal panorama. It's epic!"

The whereabouts of the original model for the image, however, is unknown, and no one actually knows whether any of the original diabolic models for the works still exist. Fleming concedes that the miracle that the authors hope for – finding one of the models or components – is unlikely to happen.

"We would dearly love to find even one small piece of the original models, but we don't have much hope," she says. "One of the few portraits we have of Habert is from his family's archive. It shows him posing with his sculpture of Miss Satan (seen in '*Conférence par Mlle Satan*' ["A Lecture by Miss Satan"]) but [the family] has only some photographs and documents, and nothing



Double Visions Of Hell: "The Devil Harvesting the Unfaithful" is one of the most ambitious diableries, and (inset) the OWL viewer created by Brian May.



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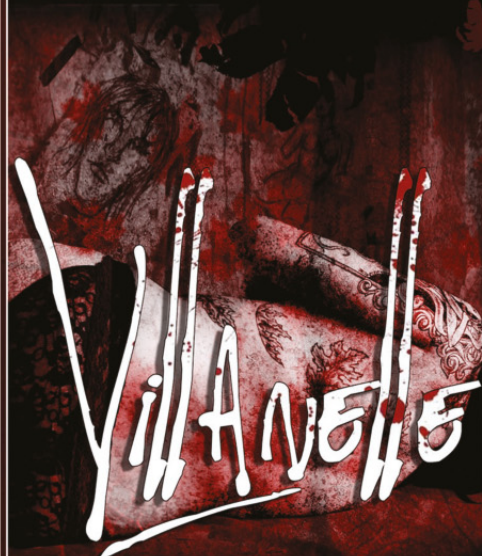
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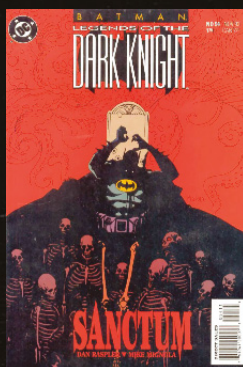
THOUGH HELLBOY, AS WE KNOW HIM TODAY, MADE HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN DARK HORSE'S 1999 *SAN DIEGO COMIC CON COMICS SPECIAL*, THIS YEAR MARKS THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHARACTER'S FIRST MAJOR STORY.

Hellboy: Seed of Destruction hit stands in March 1994 and laid the groundwork for an ever-expanding universe that includes comics, novels, short stories, animated films and two Guillermo del Toro-directed live-action features starring Ron Perlman as the titular half-demon, half-human paranormal detective. Dark Horse is closing out the character's second decade this month with a hardcover collection called *Hellboy: The First 20 Years*, along with a sampler comic and an official Hellboy Day on March 22.

He was originally summoned into earthly existence as part of a Nazi plan to get a leg up near the end of World War II, but we've since learned that the universe has big plans for Big Red. Depending on whom you ask, Hellboy is the Beast of the Apocalypse, the rightful heir to Arthur Pendragon, the saviour of mankind or the future ruler of Hell. Nowadays Hellboy is dead – his heart was torn out at the conclusion of the 2011 miniseries *The Fury* – but he's still got plenty to do; since December 2012, the character has been the focus of *Hellboy in Hell*, an ongoing series that follows his adventures in the underworld.

The shakeup in the Hellboy universe has also marked another turning point: the return of creator and long-time

Hellboy writer Mike Mignola as the series' regular artist. Via a phone interview from his California home, we asked him to guide us through his creation's first two decades, and give us a few hints of what we can expect in the years to come.



WHAT INSPIRED HELLBOY, AND HOW FAR BACK CAN YOU TRACE HIS ROOTS?

He actually started as a Batman story. ["Sanctum," *Legends of the Dark Knight* #54, 1993.] The great Archie Goodwin asked me to write a Batman story, and I'd plotted a really straight supernatural story where Batman falls into a grave and there's a skeleton kind of sucking the life out of him. It's very close to a *Hellboy in Hell* story. On one hand, Batman is lying in a grave on top of a skeleton, and then he's also in this dream world interacting with the guy whose skeleton he's lying on top of. I had so much fun doing that, and I thought, "Man, I'd like to do more stories like that ... But do I keep mak-



ing up these stories and sticking other people's characters into them, or do I make up my own guy?" So I had the kind of stories I wanted to do, and then it was just a matter of making up a character that could serve as a vehicle for all these stories. ... It was only as I started doing the comic that I started figuring out who this guy was. The original intention was never to get into Hellboy's origin at all. I have this opening sequence with Nazis conjuring this guy onto Earth, and that was really all it was going to be. Then it just snowballed.

LOVECRAFT'S MYTHOS HAS A HUGE PRESENCE IN THE HELLBOY UNIVERSE. WHAT ARE SOME OTHER, LESS OBVIOUS INFLUENCES?

Specifically, the guy who was probably the biggest thing ticking in the back of my head was Manly Wade Wellman [known for his genre mash-up stories published in *Weird Tales*] and his stories about John, who wanders around the Appalachian Mountains and just bangs into stuff. Also some of the Robert E. Howard stuff, like [the character] Solomon Kane – a guy who just roams around. I think some of the best *Hellboy* stuff is the stuff where he just wanders around. He wanders through Japan, or wanders through Ireland, and I like that about a character.

HOW DO YOU THINK HELLBOY HAS EVOLVED OVER THESE PAST TWENTY YEARS?

He's evolved in very interesting ways. He's certainly gotten more introspective, though I try not to write him that way. His world has changed a lot, certainly with moving him to Hell ... I didn't realize that it would also be a challenge, once I killed him off, to have to write a guy who was not just dead, but in Hell. How do you deal with a character who's kind of lost everything, but is still going? I don't want it to be stagnant; it's got to always be changing. Which means, at some point, you're going to turn a corner and go, "Gee, I'm gonna miss the guy he used to be." The beauty of *Hellboy* and of this structure I'm using is that there's so much room to do stories about Hellboy when he had a less complicated life. We're doing a couple of new *Hellboy in Mexico* stories, and there's talk of doing some other *Hellboy* stories set in simpler times, even before anybody was laying the whole Beast-of-the-Apocalypse prophecy on him, when he really thought he was just one of the guys.

RUMOURS ABOUT A THIRD HELLBOY MOVIE OCCASIONALLY SURFACE. DO YOU THINK IT'LL EVER HAPPEN, AND WOULD YOU WANT IT TO?

As much as I enjoyed doing the movies, I think it's unreal-

MIKE MIGNOLA REACHES BACK INTO HIS BIG RED FILES TO PICK HIS FIVE FAVOURITE HELLBOY TALES

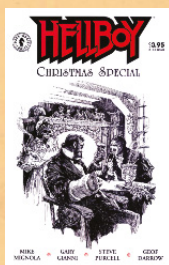
THE CHOSEN ONES

by APRIL SNELLINGS

THE CORPSE (1995)

Set in Ireland in 1959, Hellboy is tasked with retrieving an infant who has been abducted by faeries and replaced with a changeling. The faeries promise to return the child if Hellboy can secure a Christian burial for a hanged criminal.

"A lot of people consider *The Corpse* their favourite Hellboy story. It was the third one, but it was the first one where I thought, 'Okay, this could work.' That story was the biggest roller-coaster ride since I've been doing *Hellboy* – I had so much fun doing it, then I was in a panic because I thought it was unpublishable. When I finished it, I thought, 'Oh, no, what is this thing I did?' It didn't look like a regular comic to me. Then a friend of mine pointed out that it was actually the best thing I'd ever done. It was *Hellboy*'s biggest turning point, and the first one where I really felt comfortable doing it."



A CHRISTMAS UNDERGROUND (1997)

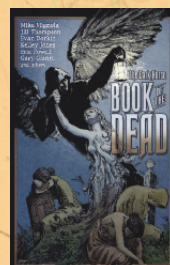
On Christmas Eve in 1989, Hellboy grants a dying old woman her final wish when he ventures to the underworld to deliver a gift to her daughter, who has been missing for years.

"I really like this one because it's so sad. I felt it had a nice emotional resonance to it – the idea of an old woman on her deathbed asking Hellboy to do something. I just thought, 'This is an odd comic where I can do some very sentimental, Christmas-y kind of story that's also basically about a vampire or a ghoul or whatever.' There's a moment I'm actually really proud of: When Hellboy's walking out of the room, there's a two-panel thing where you see him standing in the doorway, and you see [the old woman's] vision of him – you know, red suit – and she's seeing Father Christmas. There's also a panel with Hellboy holding the old woman's hand, and I thought, 'Well, if I never top it, at least I did that.'"

THE GHOUL (2005)

Hellboy confronts a poetry-spouting graverobber in a London cemetery as the ghoul's human wife watches a televised puppet theatre production of *Hamlet*.

"This one is on nobody's list of favourite stories of mine, but it's so odd and features – for no particular reason other than the weird way things work in my mind – a cutaway to puppets doing a scene from Shakespeare. That, and a ghoul that speaks entirely in old snatches of poetry, which make it one of my favourites."



THE CROOKED MAN (2008)

Hellboy befriends a repentant witch in 1950s-era Appalachia. Together they take on cannibals, shapeshifters and the titular Big Bad, a war profiteer who was hanged for his crimes and sent back from Hell to collect damned souls.

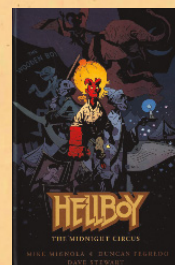
"I don't know that I'll ever write anything better than *The Crooked Man*. It was the perfect combination of elements – I had great folklore as the source material, the story came together really fast, and Richard Corben was the perfect artist to

do it. Richard made it something special. I think it's the best thing I've ever written, and the spookiest Hellboy story."

THE MIDNIGHT CIRCUS (2013)

A young Hellboy runs away from the B.P.R.D. and winds up at a macabre, otherworldly circus populated by demons.

"I should put a Duncan Fegredo book on the list! I don't know anything about circuses, but I do love *Pinocchio*, and this was a way to have Hellboy run away to visit the circus, which seems like something a little kid would do. It was really just an excuse to do *Pinocchio*."





HELLBOY 20 YEARS



King Crimson: (clockwise from top) Ron Perlman in Guillermo del Toro's *Hellboy*, Big Red fights his way through Hell, and a 20th anniversary print created by Mike Mignola.

And I think we got that and that was great, but I found it was much easier to say, "Do whatever you want," than to sit in a room while a guy is *doing* whatever he wants, especially when you say, "Let's do this," and somebody else says, "No, we're going to do this instead." It's weird when there's a *Hellboy* thing and it's not [my] thing.

BUT YOU'VE HANDED OFF PARTS OF THE *HELLBOY* UNIVERSE TO OTHER CREATORS, SUCH AS JOHN ARCUDI WITH THE *B.P.R.D.* STUFF. IS IT EASIER WHEN IT'S ANOTHER COMIC CREATOR?

Yes, because with *B.P.R.D.* I have final say. As much as I've given it to John, I can still come in and say, "No, let's not do this." But on the film stuff, I didn't have that power. Though on the first film, I did give del Toro some artwork as a bribe to take a couple of things out. [Laughs.]



LIKE WHAT?

Originally Hellboy was going to show up in a giant crib, and I said, "You know, man, I trust you on most things, but you lost me here." And I'd forgotten about this, but he recently reminded me that there was going to be something where

Abe Sapien's mouth was going to extend out when he ate, sort of like [the xenomorph] in *Alien*. I said, "Nah, it's just going to be gross. Let's not do that."

IF YOU COULD GO BACK TWENTY YEARS AND RECREATE *HELLBOY* FROM SCRATCH, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D DO DIFFERENTLY?

If I could draw it better, that would be great. [Laughs] I'd like to think if I went back, I'd have

the confidence to script the first *Hellboy* series myself. Nothing against John Byrne, but it does sound very different than the later *Hellboy* stuff. But that's just one of those things I had to go through to get to where I was going. I'm pretty happy with the way it's all worked out. I think we've done okay.

HOW LONG DO YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING *HELLBOY* STORIES?

I've plotted a certain amount of the *Hellboy in Hell* stuff, and I have vague ideas for stuff beyond that, but I can't imagine ever *not* doing *Hellboy*, and I can't imagine ever not doing this world. The Hell world ... is entirely made out of everything I want to draw. So while I'm evolving Hellboy, I'm also creating this world where I can imagine doing stories that have nothing to do with [the character]. I'm just looking at some of these cityscapes I've done and wondering, what's going on in that building? I could play that game forever. I love that world that I'm creating. 🐉

COME WITH US IF YOU WANT TO PARTY.

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NIGHT OF THE DEMONS GETS A SPECIAL
EDITION RE-RELEASE AND DIRECTOR
KEVIN TENNEY IS HERE TO PROMISE...

YOU'LL HAVE A HELL OF A TIME

BY SEAN PLUMMER

KEVIN TENNEY CHUCKLES DOWN THE PHONE LINE FROM LOS ANGELES WHEN ASKED TO RECALL WHEN HE REALIZED HIS 1988 FILM *NIGHT OF THE DEMONS* HAD BECOME A CULT HIT.

"I didn't think it was going to have longevity," he insists. "I actually called my agent and said, 'You need to get me another film before this thing comes out, 'cause when it does I will probably be unhireable.' I thought the critics were going to hate it, and most of them did. But the fanbase just embraced the hell out of it."

Recently released as a special edition Blu-ray from *Scream Factory*, *Night of the Demons* sees a group of teens heading to Hull House, an abandoned funeral home, for a Halloween party thrown by outcast goth girl Angela (Amelia "Mimi" Kinkade, pictured above) and her boy-crazy friend Suzanne (scream queen Linnea Quigley, pictured right). Debauchery ensues until Angela realizes that the rumours about Hull House are true: it's possessed. Suzanne is soon taken over by evil spirits and infects the other party-goers, who transform into horrific demons.

Tenney mostly cast unknowns in his low-budget fright fest. Indeed, Kinkade's best-known role until then was dancing in *The Stray Cats*' "Sexy and Seventeen" video.

She was Tenney's second choice to play Angela until he realized that her dancing — showcased in a self-choreographed set piece scored to the Bauhaus song "Stigmata Martyr" — made her ideal for the role.

"Amelia was that character when she read for it," he says. "She was Angela, and I can't even imagine anyone else playing the role."

Less character-driven than Tenney's debut film *Witchboard* (1986), *Demons* is memorable for its practical makeup effects, including a nasty eye-gouging, some impressive demon transformations and a did-I-really-just-see-that? moment where Quigley appears to insert an entire tube of lipstick into her nipple. Steve Johnson (*Videodrome*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4*, *Blade 2*) is credited for many of the gags, but Tenney notes that they were a team effort and some of the most memorable effects were surprisingly simple.

"When you think about it there are only a couple of really big effects," he points out. "They're just really well done, like the eye gouge and the lipstick

through the breast. But Angela floating down the hallway is one of the creepiest scenes that gets everybody, and we just put her on roller skates and gave her a shove down the hallway. And Amelia's dance, which is something everyone remembers, that's just her dancing."

With its innovative "merry-go-round for the insane" synth score (composed by Tenney's brother, Dennis Michael), striking visual compositions (influenced by Hitchcock), and leisurely pace (there is no onscreen violence for the first 45 minutes), *Night of the Demons* is one of the more accomplished horror films of the 1980s. Throw in some memorable nudity, outrageous gore and a devilish sense of humour and it became one of the decade's most fun as well.

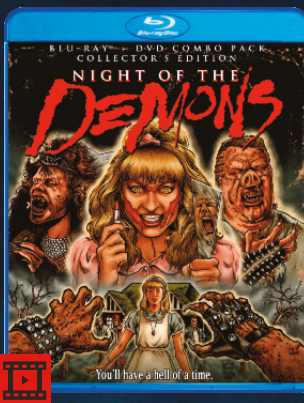
Scream Factory's Collector's Edition Blu-ray sports a new commentary (featuring Tenney, Johnson and cast members), a 70-minute retrospective documentary called *You're Invited*, a new interview with Kinkade (who has given up acting to become a pet psychic!) and gruesome cover art by illustrator Nathan Thomas Milliner.

Asked about his film's legacy, which includes two '90s-era sequels (both featuring Kinkade), a 2009 remake (produced by Tenney), and now this Blu-ray, the filmmaker is shocked.

"I'm surprised by every piece of success this film has had. I get a lot of people saying, 'How come there's no soundtrack album?'"

And I tell them, 'Are you

kidding me? If you went back in time and went on the set, you would be hard-pressed to find a single person in the cast or crew who thought it would be remembered three weeks after it hit theatres.' We didn't realize that we were making a cult classic when we were making it! We were just trying to make the best film we could make."

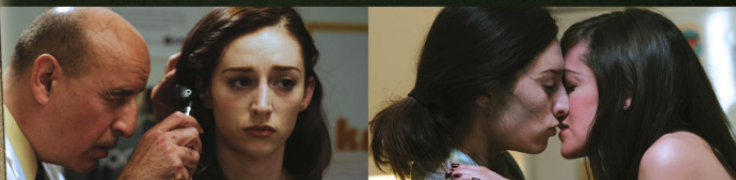


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HELL-BELLY HORROR

DEVIL'S DUE

Starring Allison Miller, Zach Gilford and Sam Anderson
Directed by Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett
Written by Lindsay Devlin
Fox

Found-footage horror is at its scariest when its claustrophobic point of view forces you to see what's in front of the camera without cutaways. The quiet observation of possessed sleep-walking in *Paranormal Activity* or Michael's zombie-like presence in the final scene of *The Blair Witch Project* are so frightening because you can't look away. *Devil's Due*, apart from its cliché plot, fails as an effective found-footage horror by not sticking to the subgenre's aesthetic.

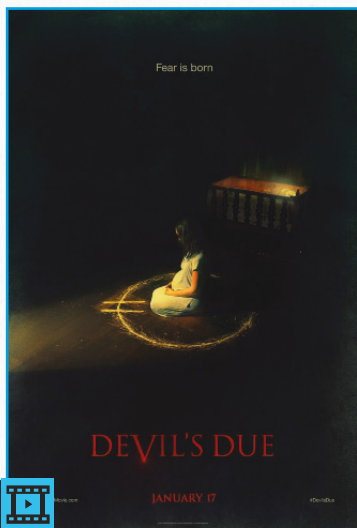
Zach (Zach Gilford) and Samantha (Allison Miller) are getting married, and Zach has decided to start documenting their relationship on video. They get hitched without a hitch in the Dominican Republic, but on the last night of their honeymoon there, a cabbie convinces them to go to a party where they get blackout drunk and become part of a strange ritual. Once back home, Samantha discovers she's pregnant and, as evidenced by the biblical quote that opens the film and the pagan-like symbols present during the

ritual, she's obviously bearing the Antichrist. Strange side effects (e.g., inexplicable bruises, her vegetarian taste buds craving raw meat and violent episodes of somnambulism) give way to even stranger ones (e.g. exhibiting animalistic behaviour, sending a priest into bloody convulsions and gaining telekinetic powers), and culminate in a sanguine-soaked conclusion. There's not much here you haven't already seen in *The Exorcist* or *Rosemary's Baby*, except perhaps some cheap jump-scares and silly CG demonface.

Devil's Due's biggest sin, however, is its use of found footage. When Zach explains that he wants to document his and Samantha's life together, one assumes this is the lazy way directors Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett are explaining that the camera will be rolling at highly unlikely times, such as when children bring it along for a game of hide and seek. The style is further cheated by the addition of spy cams, installed in the couple's house by mysterious invaders, grocery store security footage and a pin-on "adventure" cam.

Instead of captivating, the effect is distracting. Add a plot that's as fresh as trading card gum, and we wonder why this was conceived in the first place.

PATRICK DOLAN



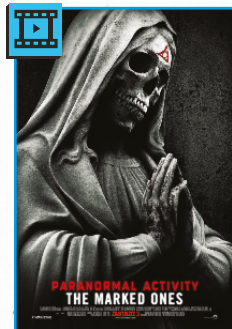
TAG, YOU'RE IT

PARANORMAL ACTIVITY: THE MARKED ONES

Starring Andrew Jacobs, Jorge Diaz and Gloria Sandoval
Written and directed by Christopher Landon
Paramount

The *Paranormal Activity* series has been filled with ups and downs, but it seems to be settling into a rhythm in which the odd-numbered entries are the good ones. The original *PA* had the shock of the new, *PA3* perfected its lo-fi/hi-fi Hollywood style, and now *Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones* gently nudges the series in a welcome new direction. Sure, that direction knocks off other found-footage Hollywood horrors that arrived in *PA's* wake (namely *The Last Exorcism* and *Chronicle*), but at least the series doesn't feel dully predictable anymore. In the diminishing returns world of Hollywood horror sequels, that's something.

Ditching technology-obsessed WASPS for a trip to the *barrio*, our heroes this time are Jesse (Andrew Jacobs) and Hector (Jorge Diaz), two recent high school grads who start filming themselves while investigating a mysterious murder in their apartment building. Rather quickly, Jesse discovers mysterious marks on his arm that a) give him superpowers, and



b) involve him with the mysterious coven that has been gradually taking over the franchise. Full-time *PA* sequel scribe Christopher Landon assumes directing duties and ditches the static bedroom camera format in favour of a little demonic possession and witch-bashing fun. Aside from retaining the quiet-loud-quiet-loud jump scare format, it's not even overtly a *Paranormal Activity* movie until a final twist cleverly folds this tale back into the original film.

It's not the first time cigar-chomping Paramount producers tried to reinvent a stale horror series for the fifth chapter, but unlike the horrendous *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*, *The Marked Ones* actually works. Now that demons, witches and action sequences are part of the *PA* experience, there's room for the found-footage series to grow and, unlike the endless *Saw* cycle, the ever-expanding franchise mythology seems to actually be building to something rather than spinning rusty wheels. Whether it will go anywhere worthwhile is unclear, but the fact that the series bounced back from a low and evolved is enough of an achievement for now. Despite spoiling 70% of its scares in the trailer, the fifth *Paranormal Activity* movie is actually worth seeing and that's a minor miracle.

PHIL BROWN

WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

NURSE 3D

Starring Paz de la Huerta, Katrina Bowden and Corbin Bleu
Directed by Douglas Aarniokoski
Written by Douglas Aarniokoski and David Loughery
eOne

I have dealt with nurses. None wore white or sported the kind of cleavage actress Paz de la Huerta does in *Nurse 3D*. Then again, none used paralytic drugs to enact vengeance against me for childhood wrongs, so there's that in their favour. But this new trash classic is less about reality show hospital drama and more about *American Mary*-meets-*Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* exploitation.

De la Huerta (*Into the Void*) stars as Abby Russell, head nurse at a Manhattan hospital who takes her new charge Danni (Katrina Bowden, *Piranha 3DD*) under her wing. But Abby's interest in Danni is more than professional, and she quickly becomes obsessed with the younger woman. After a boozy night of debauchery, Abby decides to eliminate all those who stand in the way of her winning Danni's heart (and lithe body).

But Abby's attempt to blackmail Danni with incriminating photos taken during the drunken tryst is not the first indication that Abby may be a tad mad. It's established early on that she has long used her feminine wiles to punish unfaithful men, often employing drugs and surgical tools to do so. Needless to say, Danni soon starts suspecting that Abby's attentiveness may come with some deadly strings attached.

If *Nurse 3D* sounds like *Fatal Attraction* meets *Single White Female*, well, it is. But the real reason to see it is de la Huerta. The controversial American starlet (she is arguably better known for her drunken an-



Nurse 3D

tics than her performances) can really fill out a sexy nurse's uniform (although she spends as much time out of her clothes as she does in them), but that didn't stop me from seriously questioning her acting ability. Is her stilted delivery and self-conscious performance awful or brilliant? Certainly the joy Abby evinces while hacking off a creepy guy's arm with a surgical saw makes for entertaining cinema, even if de la Huerta is more likely to win a Razzie than an Oscar for her efforts. The film's camp factor means we never take it too seriously, so perhaps *Nurse 3D* is just what the doctor ordered.

SEAN PLUMMER

MIGHT WANNA GET THAT CHECKED...

CONTRACTED

Starring Najarra Townsend, Alice Macdonald and Katie Stegeman
Written and directed by Eric England
IFC Films

There are the boys your mother warned you about, and then there's this...

Contracted is the tragic story of Sam (Najarra Townsend), a twentysomething sort-of lesbian who is slipped a roofie at a party and ends up having sex with a mysterious stranger in his car. Suffering a hangover and filled with regret, Sam realizes that something is very wrong the next day, when her nails and hair start falling out, her skin turns grey, and she experiences *Shining*-elevator levels of bleeding from her ladyparts. And that's only the beginning...

The set-up creates a lot of promising avenues to explore cultural fears around sex, sexuality and abuse: it's unfortunate that writer/director Eric England chooses none of them, electing instead to create a thematically directionless plot in which the characters act in ways that make absolutely no sense. Sam – presumably having been under a rock since birth – doesn't connect recent-unprotected-sex-with-stranger with temporally-correlative-rash-on-privates and continues to go about her daily life looking like death warmed over but apparently feeling okay enough to continue to be an unsympathetic bitch to her mother, her ex-girlfriend, her best friend, her boss and pretty much everyone else she meets.

It's not so much a portrait of a gradually fracturing psyche as it is a depiction of someone you'd probably

cross the street to avoid. The loopiest scene involves Riley, the guy who's been crushing on Sam for months, discovering her (literally) festering in a state of despair on the couch; she tells him she's all alone and needs someone... and they immediately have sex, while maggots spew from her wonder orchid. Yes, it is gross, but it is more baffling by far.

Frankly, you're really only likely to connect with this movie if your internet is broken and you're willing to wait 66 minutes to watch two girls make out.

CLAIRE HORSNELL

NOT SO FUN IN THE SUN

CASSADAGA

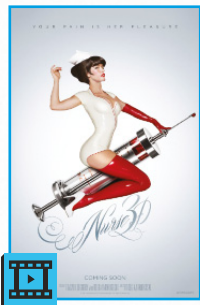
Starring Kelen Coleman, Kevin Alejandro and Louise Fletcher
Directed by Anthony DiBlasi
Written by Scott Poiley and Bruce Wood
Millennium

Finally arriving on home video more than two years after its festival debut, *Cassadaga* will no doubt arouse depressing expectations from some viewers anticipating a stinker. Nevertheless, this polished pot-boiler partially succeeds in its efforts to evoke the superior *Stir of Echoes* and is by turns harrowing and surprisingly poignant.

Lily Morel (Kelen Coleman), a deaf teacher and artist, is left grief-stricken by the tragic death of her younger sister and seeks solace in Cassadaga, Florida – “the psychic capital of the world.” She attends a séance in the hope of contacting her departed sibling, but instead summons the vengeful spirit of a murdered woman. Haunted by a series of disturbing visions, Lily is compelled to investigate the circumstances surrounding the woman's violent death. This leads to an unavoidable confrontation with a sadistic serial killer known as “Geppetto,” who transforms his victims into grotesque human marionettes – severing their limbs and reattaching them with metal joints connected to a suspended armature.

Embroidered with solid production values and competent performances, *Cassadaga* is hampered by its perfunctory plot and confused tone. Director Anthony DiBlasi (*Dread*) salivates over scenes of Geppetto stringing young women up in his dank workshop, but these coarse (if admittedly unsettling) moments often feel like they have been arbitrarily spliced in from a different movie. The stuttering prologue in which a young boy emasculates himself with a pair of scissors feels particularly forced – as do a clutch of blunt, ill-timed shocks.

More successful is the textured atmosphere of en-





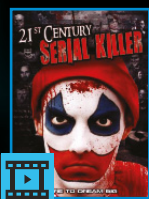
OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE GETS CHEMICAL BURNED BY BOZO

MAKEUP TEST

21ST CENTURY SERIAL KILLER

Chemical Burn Entertainment



According to several news articles, as many as one in seven people suffer from coulrophobia, meaning they're terrified of clowns. (Since I found that statistic online, obviously it's true...) Why anyone would ever want to dress like a clown is beyond me, but in the case of Aaron, the subject of *21st Century Serial Killer*, he does it to emulate John Wayne Gacy, the notorious serial killer who used to dress up like Pogo the clown. Aaron wants to become a famous murderer but his dreams are dashed because he lacks the guts to actually kill anyone – until he hooks up with a real serial killer who offers to show him the ropes. A solid dark comedy with strong performances and a twist ending, this one won't disappoint.

BODY COUNT: 13

CLOWN COUNT: 2

DAYS OF WINE AND RED NOSES

SLOPPY THE PSYCHOTIC

Chemical Burn Entertainment



Some people dress up like clowns because they want to bring joy and happiness to children, while others just want to see how many dead preteens they can stuff into the back of their car. Such is the case with Mike, a guy who loses his mind when he loses his job as a clown after he's wrongly accused of molesting a child. He snaps and goes on a killing spree that includes strangling hookers, stabbing his ex-boss, drowning a homeless guy in piss and cock-chopping a neighbourhood bully. But what really makes this film ultra-cool is the birthday party finale, featuring brats getting whacked with a poison cake, gun and a roto-tiller! Watch this and you'll never look at a clown the same way again.

BODY COUNT: 37

CLOWN COUNT: 3 + 1 mime

STEP RIGHT DOWN...

FREAKSHOW APOCALYPSE

Chemical Burn Entertainment



The only thing I hate more than clowns are sideshow carnies. You know the type – those bowler cap-wearing, handlebar moustache-sporting, fire-breathing, over-pierced douchebags who sometimes open up for shitty bands and always take themselves too seriously. The final entry in our clown threesome is filled with these guys, in a confusing tale about magicians (or alchemists?) battling each other in order to reanimate the dead or some shit. Most of the time I had no idea what was going on. Unless you're high on meth, pass on this. And clowns, just shut the fuck up and do what you're best at: making balloon dogs and cramming into tiny cars!

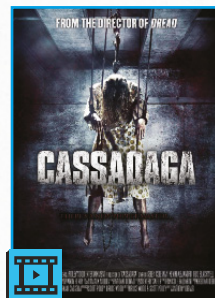
BODY COUNT: 10

CLOWN COUNT: 6

LAST CHANCE LANCE

croaching darkness, which goes some way to rescuing the film. The addition of a deaf female lead is reasonably engrossing, but the dramatic potential inherent in Lily's disability is mostly neglected. This laxness extends to the poverty of extras on Millennium's DVD, which fails to conjure up as much as a trailer. This is regrettable, as Cassadaga's real-life reputation as a devout spiritualist community would have made a fascinating featurette.

Much like Geppetto's unfortunate meat-puppets, *Cassadaga* is tethered by some ropey conventions, its movements fixed and predictable, but there is still enough here to suggest that DiBlasi could yet emerge as an accomplished voice in the genre if more cogent material drifts his way.



MICHAEL DOYLE

NEEDS A SIXTH SENSE

CHILLING VISIONS: 5 SENSES OF FEAR

Starring Nicholas Tucci, Symba and Caleb Barwick

Written and directed by Eric England, Nick Everhart,

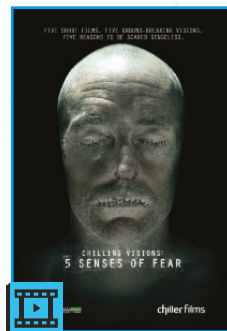
Emily Hagins, et. al.

Chiller Films

Thanks to the success of *Trick 'r Treat*, *V/H/S* and *ABCs of Death*, anthology horror has been getting a lot of attention recently. Some releases contain a couple duds, whereas as others hardly have a single standout story. *Chilling Visions* is an unfortunate example of the latter.

The gimmick for this one is that it features tales based around the five senses. It starts off with "Smell," which centres on a loser whose luck changes when he starts using a special cologne that makes him attractive to everyone. He's promoted at work, loved among his peers, and pulls down all the tail he can handle, until strange sores begin to appear all over his body. Next is "See," featuring the directorial debut of former child actor Miko Hughes (*Pet Sematary*), about an optometrist who develops a way to extract his patients' memories into eye drops. Things get bloody when the doc tries to teach an abusive patient a lesson by giving him some vicious memories. "Touch" pits a blind boy against a serial killer, and is an improvement from teenage director Emily Hagins' *My Sucky Teenage Romance*. The fourth entry, "Taste," set in a dystopian future, is about a man being interviewed at a strange corporation, who won't comply with the interviewer's demands and suffers strange consequences. Finally, "Listen" follows a trio of friends bent on finding and editing together legendary footage of a song that kills all who hear it. An unnerving mystery, "Listen" is by far the best "vision" of the five, but the concept has been seen before and done better (see Monty Python's "The Killer Joke").

Apart from the flimsy hook, there's nothing that ties these segments together. Although the film hardly assaults your senses, it also leaves little impression. As long as the *V/H/Ses* and *ABCs of Deaths* continue to be successful, expect a lot more *Chilling Visions*-style anthologies to emerge, and be quickly forgotten.



PATRICK DOLAN

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LENA HEADEY HANS MATHESON AND RODRIGO SANTORO MUSIC BY JUNKIE XL COSTUMES BY ALEXANDRA BYRNE EDITED BY WYATT SMITH DAVID BRENNER ACE
PRODUCTION DESIGNER PATRICK TATOPOULOS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON DUGGAN ACS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS THOMAS TULL FRANK MILLER STEPHEN JONES ION JASHINI PRODUCED BY ZACK SNYDER & KURT JOHNSTAD PRODUCED BY GIANNI NUNNARI MARK CANTON ZACK SNYDER DEBORAH SNYDER BERNIE GOLDMANN DIRECTED BY NOAM MURRO

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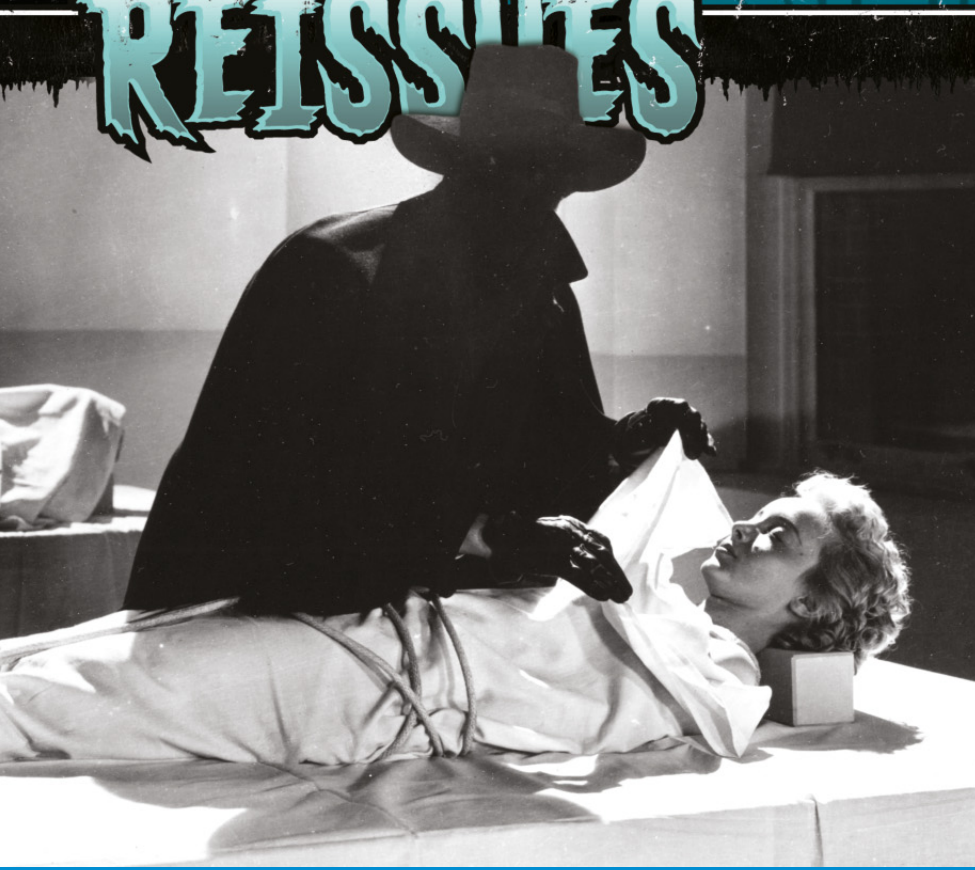


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REISSUES



DRIPPING WITH VINCENT

HOUSE OF WAX (1953) Blu-ray

Starring Vincent Price, Frank Lovejoy and Phyllis Kirk
Directed by André De Toth
Written by Crane Wilbur
Warner Brothers

With its depiction of a sympathetic madman, *House of Wax* (1953) was an unusually ghoulish choice for a major studio such as Warner Bros to pick to lead a 3-D revolution. But it was a gamble that paid off, both for the public and the studio's coffers.

Classic horror fans should recognize the story: sculptor Henry Jarrod (Vincent Price) creates historical figures in wax, but his unscrupulous business partner sees little value in Jarrod's creations. So he torches the wax museum for the insurance money and leaves Henry for dead. Crippled and disfigured, he resurfaces a year later and reopens his museum, adding a chamber of horrors with darker tableaux inspired by modern-day murders. But how does the sculptor, who can no longer use his hands, create such lifelike wax figures? And who is stealing those bodies from the morgue?



After offering a lacklustre and relatively barebones release of *House of Wax* on DVD in 2005, Warner Brothers has revisited the title for Blu-ray. This release offers a stunning new HD transfer with the option to view the film in 3-D (of course, you'll need a 3DTV to do so). The film featured Price's earliest foray into macabre movies, and has been re-released twice, in both the '70s and the '80s. It remains one of the most frequently seen 3-D films of the '50s era.

After 60 years, *House of Wax* continues to entertain in two dimensions (thanks in no small part to Price's performance) but when viewed in its original 3-D presentation it is astounding. Director André De Toth makes great use of depth, populating the screen with wax figures that seem to come to life, making their destruction during the fire sequence all the more perverse. But the film also delivers plenty of 3-D gimmickry as several items, including a severed head, are thrust into the auditorium (and now your living room). In one brilliantly conceived jump scare (copied throughout the era), a character seems to leap from the audience up into the screen.

The Blu-ray includes features from the original DVD release; a trailer, newsreel footage and the movie on which *House of Wax* was based,

Mystery of the Wax Museum (1933). Sadly, an HD restoration of this early two strip technicolor film was overlooked; however the inclusion of a new documentary and commentary with historians David Del Valle and Constantine Nasr elevates this disc from its previous DVD incarnation.

JASON PICHONSKY

SERPENT AND THE MACABRO

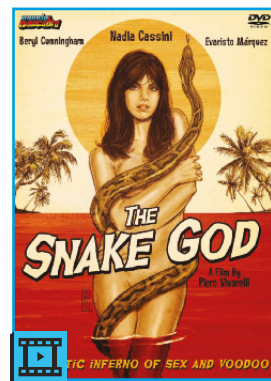
THE SNAKE GOD (1970) DVD

Starring Beryl Cunningham, Nadia Cassini and Evaristo Marquez
Directed by Piero Vivarelli
Written by Ottavio Alessi and Piero Vivarelli
Mondo Macabro

Filmed in the stunning coastal regions of Venezuela and Columbia, Piero Vivarelli's sort-of occult, mostly exotic-erotic character drama is ostensibly a tale of recent widow Paola (American-born model Nadia Cassini), whose one-time union with a mystical snake god leaves her in a perpetual state of ennui. Neither ex-lover Tony (Evaristo Marquez) nor quickie flings with the hired help seem to satisfy her, and consultations with local voodoo chiefs and best friend Stella (Beryl Cunningham) push her further towards surrendering completely to the slithering god who lives on a remote island.

The first of Vivarelli's erotic triptych, *The Snake God* is a tough film to peg. The director delivers plenty of teasing mysticism, boobery, steamy (and sometimes grovelling) intercourse, and there's a tactile sense Paola's shape-shifting deity may appear at every street corner (which he almost does, thereby blurring her grasp of reality in the film's clichéd portrait of voodoo-steeped Caribbean culture), but this isn't a film designed to scare. Vivarelli, a self-described "sex-maniac," fills every shot with artfully composed bodies and macro shots of porous skin, hair and groping hands, but the imagery is never grotesque or garish; the inference of danger comes from the eerie night scenes and celebratory occult ceremonies shot in a loose documentary style.

The first ceremony – where a goat is beheaded on camera – is the real test for viewer patience (and stomachs) because, while it's a fascinating montage of contorting and writhing bodies, it also goes on for an eternity, and Vivarelli tends to extend later scenes with similar "cultural vignettes" to pad the film's running time. The footage does make the *The Snake God* feel more like a drama instead of sexploita-



tion, but those hoping for a man-snake to emerge from an explosive green cloud and devour the heroine will not get their wish.

Benito Frattari's truly gorgeous scope cinematography is arguably the film's real star — every frame looks like a glossy magazine spread come to life — and the transfer on Mondo Macabro's DVD was sourced from a pristine print. Unfortunately, Augusto Martelli's poppy Afro-jazz score is hampered by a distorted mono mix, but it's tolerable. An interview with the late director adds some context to his intriguing career and his left-wing politics, which manifest in the film's final third.

MARK R. HASAN

DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE

MARY HARTMAN, MARY HARTMAN: THE COMPLETE SERIES (1977) DVD

Starring Louise Lasser, Greg Mullavey and Mary Kay Place

Directed by Nessa Hyams, Jim Drake, Joan Darling, et. al

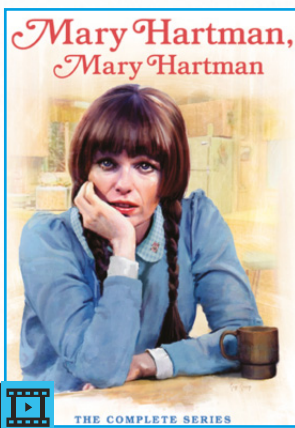
Written by Jerry Adelman, Ann Marcus, Daniel Gregory Browne, et. al

Shout! Factory

It's long been known that what really put the nail in the coffin of grindhouse cinema was when mainstream movies started producing stuff that was even more extreme. Prior to the '90s, the sort of unrestrained insanity that we've come to take for granted in Tarantino and Rodriguez movies was restricted to a very specific sort of film, which kept that level of sex, violence and generalized misanthropy away from the sensitive eyes of mainstream America. Taken in that context, Shout!'s release of *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* is a fascinating cultural artifact. In 1977, the heyday of grindhouse cinema, the show was already bringing 42nd Street to America's living rooms, whether they realized it or not.

Ostensibly a parody of 1960s and '70s daytime soaps, *Mary Hartman* plays less like a heavy-handed comedy sketch than a David Lynch series broadcast in Hell. Even more than *Twin Peaks*, this is *Blue Velvet: The Series*.

The show revolves around the slowly deteriorating psyche of the titular Mary (a revelatory Louise Lasser), a guileless, cute-in-a-Sissy-Spacek-sort-of-way homemaker whose domestic complacency is abruptly shattered when the world around her begins to deteriorate in a whirlwind of mass murder, STD epidemics, evil child preachers and hillbilly gang rape. Initially protected by her naiveté, she is brought closer to a complete mental breakdown by each successive tragedy, aided in part by the machina-



tions of her infantile husband (*I Dismember Mama's* Greg Mullavey, defining "banally evil").

Lacking a laugh track or any trace of flippancy, the show's caustic humour (and just plain mordancy) comes from the series being played completely straight, from the washed-out colour scheme to the dead seriousness of the cast. Mary's world is a nightmare hellhole of dank bowling alleys and country and western organ music, from which the only escape is either psychological annihilation or a grisly end (though bloodless, the deaths on the series are worthy of a high-grade slasher).

While the DVDs lack any special features, the show simply being released is special enough. Though 325 episodes were produced, due to convoluted rights issues, only the first 25 have ever been rebroadcast, meaning most of *Mary Hartman* hasn't been seen outside of bootlegged VHS for over 40 years. Shout!'s epic 38-disc box set finally brings viewers the entire 8100-minute saga, from its surrealistic premier to its Faustian denouement. Genre fans rejoice: a true lost classic has been found.

PRESTON FASSELL

TEENAGE TROUBLE

THE BEAST WITHIN (1982) Blu-ray

Starring Ronny Cox, Bibi Besch and Paul Clemens

Directed by Philippe Mora

Written by Tom Holland

Scream Factory

Ah, those teenage years. The passion and energy, the feeling of invincibility, and the last chance to rebel against your parents before you slowly start to become them. It's a time when girls become women, and boys become snarling, psychopathic swamp monsters. That's if you're Michael MacCleary (Paul Clemens), the poor kid undergoing a terrifying transformation



The Beast Within

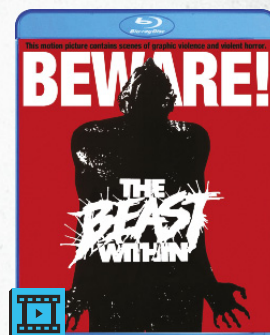
in 1982's *The Beast Within*.

As is the way these things go, the film opens with a flashback sequence; just off the side of a backwoods road, Caroline MacCleary (Bibi Besch) is forcibly impregnated by a slimy humanoid creature while her husband Eli (*RoboCop's* Ronny Cox) is off finding help. Seventeen years later, their teenage son Mike starts changing. Is he experiencing typical teenage angst or does he have a beast within? How many townspeople need to be beheaded and disembowelled before that distinction becomes important? Not many, apparently, as Mike's beast takes full control and follows in his dad's clawed footsteps, disappearing into the darkness in search of a victim with whom he can carry on his line.

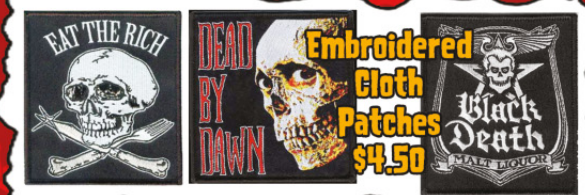
TBW could very well have been a powerful statement on the typically tumultuous transformation from boyhood to adulthood and an even stronger lesson on the cycle of violence (the history of the swamp beast and the townsfolk's knowledge of it would have benefited from further exploration, as opposed to a single line of exposition), but given director Philippe Mora's predilection for literal beasts (he would go on to direct two subpar sequels to Joe Dante's *The Howling*), a face-value monster flick is what you get. Not that there's anything wrong with that, in theory. The issue here is that up until the last few splatery moments (Tom Burman's makeup is pretty sweet), the movie is rather dull.

Scream Factory's new Blu-ray is serviceable; it doesn't look or sound too bad, and the audio commentaries (one with director Mora and star Clemens, the other with writer Tom Holland) are there for the mega-fans, whoever and wherever they may be.

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Crawlspace

EVERYBODY LOATHES KINSKI

CRAWLSPACE (1986) Blu-ray

Starring Klaus Kinski, Talia Balsam and Tané

Written and directed by David Schmoeller

Scream Factory

Crawlspace would have undoubtedly remained a footnote in the history of schlockmeister Charles Band's long-bankrupt film factory Empire Pictures were it not for one asset: star Klaus Kinski. The mad German, best known to fright fans for essaying the titular vampire in frequent collaborator Werner Herzog's 1979 remake of *Nosferatu*, is both charming and creepy in writer/director David Schmoeller's tale of a Nazi landlord with a penchant for torturing and murdering his female tenants.

Released a year after Empire made its mark with *Re-Animator*, *Crawlspace* casts the notoriously prickly Kinski (*Aguirre: The Wrath of God*) as said landlord, Karl Gunther. In a previous life Gunther was an Argentinian doctor with the nasty habit of euthanizing his dying patients. He is also the son of a Josef Mengele-like Nazi doctor, and has inherited his father's love of killing, which he practices seemingly without impunity upon the lovelies to whom he rents rooms.

But before that, he uses the apartment building's crawlspace – more like air ducts, but who would watch a movie called *Air Duct?* – to spy upon the ladies lunching, fucking and bathing. Gunther goes mostly undetected until Lori (Talia Balsam) complains about noises in the wall. Soon enough, she is marked for death by the testy Teuton, who uses a variety of clever mechanical traps to impale his prey.

Scream Factory's Blu-ray release includes *Puppetmaster* director Schmoeller's 1999 short film *Please Kill Mr. Kinski*, which details his leading man's asshole-ish behaviour on set and a producer's request to kill Kinski for the insurance money. Also included is a featurette with makeup effects artist John Vulich (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) recalling Kinski's volatile temperament and an admirably honest commentary track from Schmoeller who admits that *Crawlspace* is not actually very good, save for his lead.

As for Kinski, he easily sells his character's madness, which includes imprisoning a woman in his attic after cutting out her tongue, bisecting a rat, and disposing of the nosy brother of one of his euthanasia victims by anally impaling him. His penchant for eyeliner and lipstick make him look like a demented member of Duran Duran, but he nevertheless imbues Gunther with a vulnerability that allows him to be at least a partially sympathetic psychotic.



SEAN PLUMMER

THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILE: *Cutting Class*

by Paul Corupe

It seems as though there are endless arguments about which films most influenced the VHS-era slasher boom, but there's far less controversy over the genesis of the giallo in the 1960s and '70s. Mario Bava gets most of the credit, but there were plenty of other, smaller 1960s Euro-horror pics that helped refine the formula and set the template for the stylish erotic thrillers of the following decade.

The House That Screamed – one of the missing links between Bava and Dario Argento – is a sexually-charged period whodunit that brought giallo conventions sharply into focus before the genre exploded in the 1970s. A bootleg mainstay, the film now hits DVD shelves via a four-film release from Timeless/Shout! Factory, which includes other vintage exploitation entries *The Bat People*, *The Vampire* and *The Screaming Skull*.

Directed by Uruguayan-born Narciso Ibáñez Serrador and shot in a creepy Spanish manor, *The House That Screamed* follows new student Theresa (Christina Galbó) as she adjusts to life at a finishing school for wayward girls that's ruled over by Mme. Fourneau (Lilli Palmer). When not sternly instructing her charges, the headmistress is busy keeping her Peeping Tom son Luis (John Moulder-Brown) away from the troubled female students. Theresa struggles to fit in, and can't believe rumours that Fourneau has a unique punishment for disobedient pupils: favoured student Irene (Mary Maude) helps Fourneau strip, hold down and cruelly whip her classmates. That's bad enough, but things start to get really gruesome when one girl sneaks off to meet Luis and is promptly murdered. When more girls go missing, it becomes obvious that something far more sinister than algebra is going on behind the classroom doors.

Lesser known than his 1976 effort *Who Can Kill a Child?*, Serrador's *The House That Screamed* shares some similarities with his later Spanish horror classic. The narrative unfolds as a mystery, centred on a group of inscrutable young people



who seem to behave by their own code. But where his later film brought intergenerational atrocities into the bright sun and white adobe exteriors, this film is a dark, mannered affair more focused on mood – the dark, polished wood furniture and orderly bookcases of the school's interior hide a broken and twisted social order. As more secrets are revealed, the sophisticated veneer gives way to menacing shots of gloomy passageways and the occasional cockroach scrambling across the dinner table – a throw-back to the crumbling castles of *Black Sunday*, *Castle of the Living Dead* and other Euro-chillers of the mid-1960s.

Bava himself emphasized the sadistic sexual undertones of giallo in *The Whip and the Body* (1963), but *The House That Screamed* may even top that film, offering up a hormonal hotbed that clearly anticipates Argento's ballet school in *Suspiria* (and also, arguably, the sorority in *Black Christmas*). Although Serrador shies away from anything too explicit (the girls shower in sheer white nightgowns), the film pulses with eroticism. Hints of lesbianism give way to full sado-masochistic flights of fancy and, eventually, implied incest – Mme. Fourneau repeatedly tells her

son that he must marry a girl "just like her." More often resembling a women-in-prison flick than a slasher, the film's undercurrent of pent-up sexual energy gives the ongoing a particularly unseemly edge, especially compared to Antonio Margheriti's girls-school-set giallo *Naked You Die* (1968).

Despite so much going on under the surface, Serrador still gets in one graphic bloodletting scene. The film's centrepiece is a dramatic slow-mo murder in the greenhouse that clearly influenced many of the stylish giallo kills that came in its wake. While waiting for Luis, a girl is grabbed from behind and her throat is slashed mercilessly. A picturesque backdrop, light glinting on a knife blade and an effective use of time manipulation brings out a twisted beauty in the grotesque images.

But even though this scene is remarkable and influential, it's important to remember that no one film or director is responsible for kick-starting an entire horror subgenre. It's a progressive combination and evolution of ideas that eventually solidify into a recognizable pattern. Just as dozens of films – including Bava's work – helped define the '80s slasher, barely repressed perversion and masterfully directed murder in *The House That Screamed* are just a few of the building blocks that helped giallo become a phenomenon. 🐼





CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT

R



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

This Maniac's Mansion
by John W. Bowen

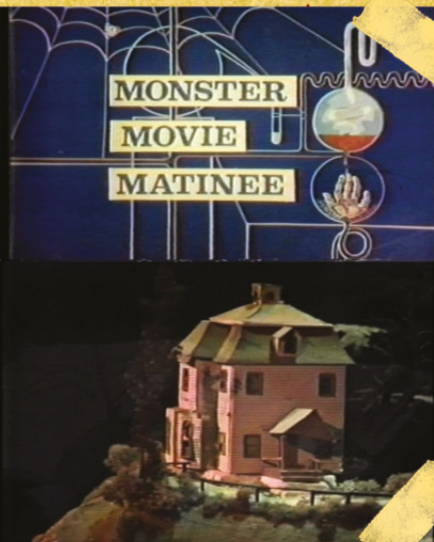
As Stephen King once famously kicked things off, this is what happened.

Back in *RM#85*, I took a fond and foggy look back at *Monster Movie Matinee*, a locally-hosted weekly fright flick show out of Syracuse, New York, that ran from 1964 to 1980 and served almost exclusively as my introduction to horror movies while I was growing up in Kingston, Ontario. To my cackling delight, the column drew some fan mail from folk in upstate New York and southeastern Ontario who remembered the show and its co-hosts – Dr. E. Nick Witty and his assistant Epal – as fondly as I did. Little did I know that only a few months later (*RM#98*) I'd wind up reviewing the excellent *American Scary*, one of those why-did-no-one-think-of-doing-this-before docs profiling a staggering number of regionally popular horror movie hosts of the era, from Ghouardi to Vampiria to Chilly Billy Cardille, and featuring WSTM Syracuse's own Alan Milair, better known as the aforementioned Dr. Witty.

I'll tell you without reservation, Be-leaguered Reader, that by the time I spoke to Milair in late 2008, I'd already done one-on-one interviews with Tobe Hooper, Don



Coscarelli, John Carpenter, Wes Craven, Alexandre Aja and many more, and it weren't nothin' but a thing, so how tall an order was a long-retired horror movie host from the pre-cable era? Fucking huge, as it turned out – this guy had played an enormous role in forming proclivities and preoccupations that would follow me the rest of my life. That's right, kids. I got nervous,



or as close as I get to it.

As it turned out, the venerable Mr. Milair was a delightful gent who was "tickled pink" (his words) that his show still had such a legacy. We had a great chat, anecdotes were trotted out, the column was published, and I figured that was that. Then *American Scary* came out shortly

thereafter, the review was published, and I figured that was that. Milair died in 2012 at the age of 81, so I figured that was really and truly that. Well, stupid me. After loving horror all my life, and working for *Rue Morgue* for almost fifteen years, I, of all people,

should have known that "that" is rarely ever "that."

Enter Syracuse filmmaker and incorrigible fan-boy Andy Wolf and producer Alex Dunbar, who invited Milair to dish at length about *Monster Movie Matinee* during the final year of his life, and supplemented the ghastly goodies with reminiscences from sundry *MMM* crew members

and obsessed local collectors, plus earlier interview footage with Bill "Epal" Lape, Milair's beloved co-conspirator on and off-screen, who had died just a few years prior. The end result is *Monster Mansion Memories*, a loving and finely crafted tribute to a show that was simultaneously very much a child of its time and yet stood out as fantastically original and ingenious in terms of design and execution by its two actor/writers and a skeleton crew of technicians and craftsmen who, week after week, made virtually everything out of virtually nothing.

Wolf and Dunbar have gone to some pretty incredible lengths to dig up lost footage and artifacts for this remarkable doc, replete with extras including old footage from the show and a hugely entertaining commentary track with the filmmakers and Milair's daughter Shawn Wayson. So whether or not you grew up in the region in question, you owe it to yourself as a fan and a student of our beloved genre to check out *Monster Mansion Memories*, available through windupfilmsny@gmail.com or search for "Monster Mansion Memories" on Facebook.

Well, you've got your shopping list, so get the hell out of my basement and go buy it. And *American Scary* while you're at it. Oh, and back issues of *RM#85* and *#89*, 'cause how else am I gonna get rich? 🍷

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BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

Anthologies are as intrinsic to the horror genre as haunted houses, crazed serial killers and twist endings. There's something about the format that is immensely appealing to horror writers and lends itself to virtually all media, including movies, television, books and, of course, comics.

"Anthologies work so well for horror because it forces the storyteller to really boil the tale down to its essence," says writer and editor, Rachel Deering. "No frills, no dragging plots, just straight to the good stuff!"

Deering's dedication to the format has given birth to *In the Dark*, an ambitious original anthology (to be released by IDW next month) that unites some of the best writers and artists in the industry. Steve Niles, Tim Seeley, Paul Tobin, Cullen Bunn, Drew Moss and Andy Belanger are just some of the talent brought together by Deering for this 368-page opus.

"I've wanted to put together a horror anthology since I got into making comics full-time," reveals Deering. "*Creepy* and *Eerie* were the books that got me into the medium in the first place, so I've always had a soft spot for short horror stories. When I presented the idea to potential contributors, they were all thrilled to be able to tell a horror story with so much freedom, and agreed to be a part of the book without a second thought."

Deering has only been working in horror comics a relatively short time but has already proven herself to be a force to be reckoned with. In 2011 she burst onto the scene with her lesbian werewolf epic, the partially Kickstarter-funded *Anathema*. A brilliant Hammer homage, it showcased Deering's love for the genre and helped to bring her into contact with several creative people within the industry.

Deering then went back to Kickstarter with an idea for an all-original, hardcover anthology. The response was so great – she successfully doubled the intended target goal for the project – that it caught the interest of IDW, not to mention several creators who offered to participate. She was thrilled.

Though the project was driven by her, she made a conscious effort not to stifle any of the participants with rigid editorial control.

"I chose writers and artists who I knew would tell a great horror story and wouldn't need much guidance from me," says Deering. "I gave them total freedom to tell the kind of horror story they wanted to tell. I really wanted this book to have something to scare everyone. I may have mentioned that I love creature features to every contributor, though!"

There is certainly no shortage of creatures in *In the Dark*, with plenty of traditional – and non-traditional – monsters rampaging through its pages. Deering's own story, "Swan Song," features something unknown singing hypnotically from inside a coffin that happens to be dragged behind a gypsy wagon. There are also Lovecraftian tentacle beasts, cold-blooded murderers and one or two fanged killers.

In addition to the 24 tales of terror, fans will be treated to an introduction by *American Vampire* scribe Scott Snyder, a Pin-Up Gallery and an exclusive "History of Horror Comics" by comic historian Mike Howlett. All in



In the Dark: A page from Cullen Bunn's "Murder Farm," featuring art by Drew Moss and colours by Tamra Bonvillian.

all, it's a package that Deering is sure will please even the most discerning of genre fans.

"It's so incredibly diverse, you can read through the entire thing and not feel like any themes are repeated," she boasts. "Every story is so different and fresh, from classic creature features to modern body horror and psychological terrors."

Ultimately though, Deering has put together a book she believes would do her eight-year-old self proud.

"Horror anthologies were the first comics I ever read as a kid. When I was eight years old, my uncle gave me a stack of magazines like *Creepy*, *Eerie* and *The Savage Sword of Conan*. I absolutely loved the Warren magazines." 🦋

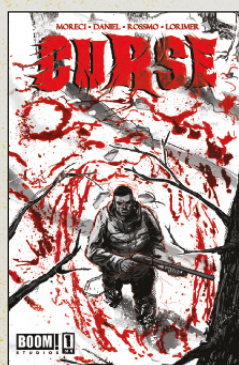
FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTER @PCABEZUELO



In Juice Squeezers, the town of Weeville, California, holds a secret: underneath the tranquil homes lies an army of giant bugs, ready to unleash a swarm of chaos on the populace. Lucky for Weeville, a group of tweens called the Juice Squeezers are on the case, infiltrating the earthen tunnels in order to squash some pests. Their latest assignment is to protect newcomer Billy and his father from what lies beneath the farmland they just purchased. David Lapham does a great job grounding the crazy premise with some nice interplay between the kids. He also excels with the bug squishing and making the giant insects suitably revolting. It's clear that he's going for a fun, *Goonies*-like vibe and he succeeds admirably. Just replace the pirate treasure with bug guts.



What would you do if your son was dying of a terminal disease and you needed extra money for treatment? If you're Laney, you spend your nights trying to hunt down whatever has been



brutally killing people in the county, in order to collect the bounty. What Laney doesn't realize, however, is that the man he's hunting is not a man at all. Michael Moreci and Tim Daniel have started *Curse* on a great foot, giving us

some solid characterization, while still providing enough of a visceral thrill to not disappoint gorehounds. Riley Rossmo and Colin Lorimer do a fantastic job on the art, with muted colours stressing the project's cold and bleak atmosphere. An intriguing premise beautifully executed.

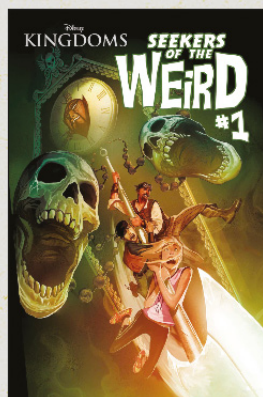
Trick is a high school student dying of cancer. Unfortunately for him, the vampire that attacks him doesn't know that, and doesn't take too kindly to drinking "poisoned" blood. Vowing revenge for tainting him, the bloodsucker swears to make the boy suffer for the rest of his life by forcing him to watch those closest to him die in agony. Tired of being a victim, Trick decides to fight back. *Bad Blood* starts with a bang and doesn't let up, sucking (pardon the pun) the reader into a world of de-

spair and horror. Trick is an immensely sympathetic character, not only because of his condition

but also because of the supernatural nightmare he's thrown into. The vampires here are brutal and animalistic – as exemplified in Tyler Crook's art – making Trick's decision to fight back seem even more hopeless. However, as the last page hints, help is on the way, hopefully paving the way for an impressive showdown.



Not content to simply mine amusement park rides, Disney is now seeking inspiration from props found within those rides, specifically the odd curios in the Haunted Mansion. Luckily, the company has entrusted *Disney Kingdoms: Seekers of the Weird* to some very



talented people and the result is a highly entertaining, if not wholly original, spook-fest. Max and Melody are teenage siblings whose parents own a knick-knack store called Keep It Weird. When some of the stuffed animals in the shop come to life and kidnap their parents, Max and Melody learn the true nature of the business and come face to face with De-

spoina and her Society of Shadows, who will stop at nothing to acquire the mysterious Coffin Clock. The issue moves at a fast click and though many of the elements are familiar – teen protagonists, hereditary secrets, kidnapped parents, maps, keys, etc. – writer Brandon Seifert presents them in a compelling fashion. Add some pleasing art by Karl Moline and you have a good opening chapter in what looks to be a fun romp.

Frank Baum's original backstory for the Tin Woodsman is one of Oz's most tragic and horrific tales, with poor Nick Chopper, the human lumberjack, systematically cutting off parts of his body with an enchanted axe, and slowly replacing each appendage with metal. Strangely, this origin story decides to go its own route in *Grimm Fairy Tales: Tales from Oz*, which is not necessarily a bad thing, except that this route is far, far less interesting. Instead of a grotesque fable, we get a clichéd tale of doomed lovers and jealous women. Granted, these elements were in the original story, yet the way they are presented here is just plain dull, and not at all helped by Noah Salonga's boob-tastic artwork. The eventual transformation is lazy and uninspired. A wasted opportunity. 🐞



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THE ASHGATE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LITERARY AND CINEMATIC MONSTERS

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, ed.
Ashgate

That this book covers a lot of ground in its 625 pages goes without saying – after all, it is an encyclopedia – but in this instance the terrain is especially vast. Monsters are a fundamental concept, not only for horror and its kin (sci fi and fantasy), but for humanity across the globe, since the dawn of time. These creatures have been with us for millennia, and are found literally everywhere. It is a significant achievement to compile such a monster volume and to adequately reflect this fact while providing uniformly high expertise on the fields of mythology,

religion, literature and film from around the world.

The editor, Jeffrey A. Weinstock, is a notable horror scholar (see *RM#126* for a review of his *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema*) and he expertly organizes the literary and cine-

matic monsters around a relatively small number of entries (about 200) so that the reader is not lost among them. For example, instead of separate small sections for Azathoth, Cthulhu, Dagon, Yog Sothoth etc., you get a big one: “Lovecraft, Monsters in” – written by the esteemed expert S. T. Joshi. Similarly organized are the creatures from Dante, Swift, Tolkien and the *Harry Potter* books. Everything is here: human monsters in general (under Psychopath), with notable individuals treated separately (Norman Bates, Hannibal Lecter); extraterrestrials, creatures from myth (Medusa) and urban legends (which includes cryptids such as Nessie, Yeti, etc), occultism (elementals), classical literature (Rabelais), gothic (Carmilla), modern genre literature (Lestat) and film (Freddy Krueger, Pinhead), plus an entry on monsters in video games.

This encyclopedia even covers lesser known creatures from Europe, Russia, China, Japan, etc. Also, general entries on Demons, Devil, Ghost and Vampire take up many dozens of

pages and offer essential contextualization.

The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters is the best reference book covering our beloved genre to come out in the past five or six years and any serious-minded scholar should have it close at hand. The only fault: the big hardcover is quite pricey. Certainly knowledge of this size and quality does not come cheap; still, this deserves a more accessible paperback edition, because this is the encyclopedia you can't afford to miss.

DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

TORTURE PORN: POPULAR HORROR AFTER SAW

Steve Jones
Palgrave Macmillan

Love it or hate it, torture porn is the subgenre that defined horror in the first decade of the 21st century. Commonly slammed by mainstream critics with the six “gr-” adjectives – gratuitous, gruesome, graphic, grisly, gross and grotesque – the films thus labelled are controversial even among genre fans. The first book-length study devoted to the phenomenon aims to clarify the numerous issues attendant to these films – and succeeds admirably.

Steve Jones, lecturer in Media at Northumbria University in the UK, first deals with the torture porn term itself, accepting it grudgingly as a “discourse which discloses less about the films themselves than it does about critical responses to popular horror more generally.” Then he addresses the inevitable questions relevant for the topic, such as continuities within the horror genre (from slasher to torture porn) and within critical reaction to it; the alleged lack of substance in these films, especially their (im)morality; the regulation of taste boundaries by the media; and the inevitable questions of how violent and pornographic these movies really are.

The author challenges the presumptions of critics whose ill-founded accusations he proves to have been based on prejudice and not on the actual content of the films. Are these films sadistic exercises

that invite the audience to identify with the killer? Through careful analysis of plot structures and cinematic devices, Jones convincingly argues that the majority are not.

This pioneering study bravely goes to uncharted territories in order to adequately explain the label's implied porn-horror confluence and examines such critically neglected subgenres as “brutal horror” (faux snuff of the *August Underground* variety), “hardcore horror” (porn films with horror motifs such as *Porn of the Dead*) and “extreme porn” (degradation-based hardcore à la the *Meatholes* series).

Jones' step-by-step deconstruction of the most common judgments regarding torture porn will be heartwarming to any fan of horror because, regardless of one's personal attitude to the subgenre, the book's analysis vastly transcends its nominal topic and offers exciting and illuminating insights regarding the mixture of violence and sexuality in cinema in general. With its lucid and well-supported arguments *Torture Porn* is certain to be a milestone in horror studies and its findings indispensable in all future debates about violent entertainment.

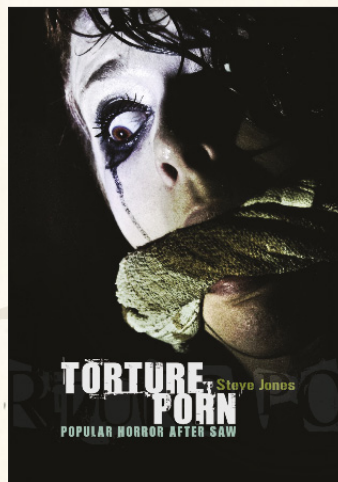
DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

OUT IN THE DARK: INTERVIEWS WITH GAY HORROR FILMMAKERS, ACTORS AND AUTHORS

Sean Abley
Lethe Press

With recent titles such as *Suffered from the Night: Queering Stoker's Dracula* (see review p.49) and *Where Thy Dark Eye Glances: Queering Edgar Allan Poe*, Lethe Press is quickly becoming a forerunning publishing house for LGBT

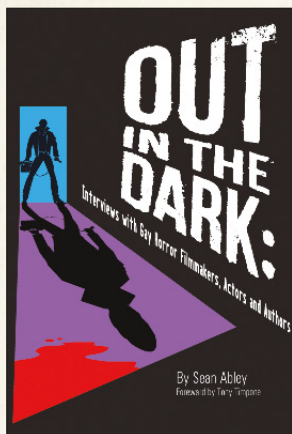
speculative fiction. In *Out in the Dark*, writer Sean Abley utilizes his years of experience (and material from) working on fangoria.com's “Gay of the Dead” blog to bolster this collection of journalistic-style interviews with 31 men working in the horror industry. Fans of Abley's blog will be pleased to find several new interviews alongside the republished material, along with updates on past interviews and a foreword by former *Fangoria* editor Tony Timpone.





Out In The Dark: A scene from I Was a Teenage Werebear.

Abley's approach is direct and concise, as well as playful and upbeat, which allows for some genuinely enthusiastic and intriguing responses from his interviewees (notable highlights among many include director Tim Sullivan on *I Was a Teenage Werebear*, actor Ryan Metzger on growing up in Fargo and filmmaker Mark Bes-senger on the terrifying nature of Disney movies). He quickly establishes common ground with his subjects, often helping to make for a more personal (and thus more interesting) exchange. Among those he talks to are filmmaker Don Mancini (*Child's Play*), award-winning author Lee Thomas (*Like Light for Flies*) and indie mainstays such as Bruce LaBruce (*L.A. Zombie*) and Joshua Grannell (a.k.a. Peaches Christ), among others.



Abley's interviews explore the shifting dynamic in the horror world in regards to homosexuality – how, until recently, gay characters were only portrayed in a negative light on screen, and how it has become easier to talk openly about sexuality since genre icons such as Clive Barker began to come out of the closet in the early '90s.

Aside from heavier subject matter, Abley mixes in lighter material as well ("It seems as though you were the only actor who didn't get to shoot some sort of sex scene. Bummed?" he asks Metzger), which mines a lot of straight-up gab from his subjects. *Out in the Dark* is a great read – no matter what team you play for.

JESSA SOBCZUK

THE TROOP

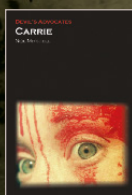
Nick Cutter
Gallery Books

Since its inception, the Boy Scout motto has always been "Be Prepared." However, I don't think anything could have prepared a group of five youngsters for what would occur in Nick Cutter's *The Troop*.

Scoutmaster Tim Riggs along with scouts Max, Kent, Ephraim, Shelly and Newton are off on a weekend camping trip to Falstaff Island, a small piece of land that lies just off the coast of Prince Edward Island. As the sun goes down on their first night outdoors all seems to be going well for Tim and the boys. That is until a sickly, emaciated stranger arrives on the island looking for help. Bound by Tim's oath as a physician and their duty as scouts they offer their assistance, and that's when things take a turn for the absolute worst. The stranger is home of a new strain of parasite, which quickly finds its way into its new hosts.

Preteen boys aren't the most diplomatic at the best of times, and it only gets nastier when

THE GRIM READER



DEVIL'S ADVOCATES: CARRIE

Neil Mitchell

Auteur

Continuing the *Devil's Advocates'* series of single film investigations is this 100-page look at Brian De Palma's *Carrie*.

Neil Mitchell traces the 1976 film from its genesis as Stephen King's debut novel, through its adaptation, shoot and ongoing legacy. He also examines its key themes and motifs – albeit occasionally too briefly. While great for those curious about the film, hardened *Carrie*-philes, who've watched all the extras and read other academic treatise, will find little new here.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



SUFFERED FROM THE NIGHT: QUEERING STOKER'S DRACULA

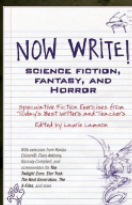
Steve Berman, ed.

Lethe Press

Steve Berman's latest collection of speculative shorts, *Suffered from the Night: Queering Stoker's Dracula* explores the homoerotic undertones running through Stoker's pivotal novel – and the varying nuances of sexuality hidden in the vampire mythos itself.

Lee Thomas, Livia Llewellyn, Jeff Man and eleven other authors offer up terrifying (and often epistolary) stories that reimagine Stoker's characters in both a classic and modern context, making this a very intriguing effort.

JESSA SOBCZUK



NOW WRITE! SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY, AND HORROR

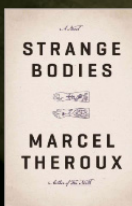
Laurie Lamson

Tarcher Penguin

If you're an aspiring writer with a penchant for genre, this is one guide you'll want to pick up. Instead of merely relaying the tricks, tools and best practices

of the fiction game, each entry – from *Diabolical Evil for Beginners* to *The Choreography of Violence* – comes with exercises to put what you've just learned to practice. While not every chapter will apply to every writer, with each section penned by a professional scribe, you can't go wrong with this 360-page interactive how-to.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



STRANGE BODIES

Marcel Theroux

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Professor Nicholas Slopen is dead, mangled in a road accident. But a few miles away, in a psychiatric hospital, one of the inmates insists that he is Nicky – backing his claim with details that only

Nicky would know. The mystery of this dual existence leads the reader through an intriguing philosophical exploration of identity – and the dangers of technology without limits. Compelling stuff.

JUSTINE WARWICK

ON THE EVE OF ITS REISSUE, NANCY BAKER TAKES STOCK OF HER FIERCE 1993 TORONTO-SET BLOODSUCKER NOVEL THE NIGHT INSIDE

The Night Inside

by
MONICA S. KUEBLER

TWENTY YEARS AGO, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE LAST VAMPIRE BOOM, NANCY BAKER'S TORONTO-SET BLOOD-SUCKER EPIC *THE NIGHT INSIDE* PITTED A

centuries-old nightwalker against an affluent immortality seeker and an underground ring of pornographers in a tale that was equal parts gory and soul-searching. Now, with the publishing rights to the novel and two more of Baker's classic vampire books reverted back to their author, Chizine Publications is reissuing the trio as ebook exclusives.

"I never really considered setting it anywhere else," says Baker of the story's locale. "My husband offered me elaborate plot ideas that involved drug dealers and the Mexican Day of the Dead, but I knew I'd never be able to pull that off. It just seemed logical to write about the world I knew. [The main character] Ardeth lived in my real apartment and many of the settings were places that I walked around on a day-to-day basis. In many ways, Toronto seemed like the perfect setting for the kind of story I wanted to tell, which was more intimate and contained than horrific."

The Night Inside follows Dimitri Rozokov, a vampire who awakens in the 1990s after a near century-long slumber. He'd originally gone to ground in hopes of losing those pursuing him, yet as he emerges from hibernation, he's captured almost immediately. As his kidnappers wait to deliver him to the mysterious person who hired them, they starve him and force him to participate in pornographic snuff films in which he literally ravages the leads – to death. Enter Ardeth Alexander, a university student hired to do (seemingly innocent) research by the person behind Rozokov's abduction. With the work completed, her employer is now cleaning house of anyone linked to the scheme and Ardeth becomes Rozokov's latest food source – but instead of accepting her fate, she forms an alliance with the vampire, allowing both of them to take revenge on their captors.

"I never really thought of Rozokov as monstrous, though he clearly has done terrible things in order to survive," says Baker. "In my mind, he was someone who had already spent hundreds of years as a vampire, so had gotten whatever

urges towards cruelty he had out of his system long before the events of the book. His real goal is to find a way to make his life meaningful. That's the same challenge that Ardeth faces, but she's just starting out on her journey and her vision of what being a vampire means is shaped by media, the same way Rozokov's had been shaped by folklore and religion. ... In the books, being a vampire didn't make you a monster, though it certainly made it easier. If you were a monster, you made the choice to be one."

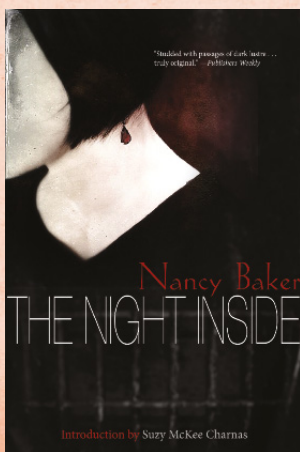
The novel evolved from a short story idea that Baker had about a captive vampire and a circus, which became much more sinister and detailed over time. She credits Suzy McKee Charnas' *The Vampire Tapestry*, another tale featuring a vampire held in captivity, for providing some of the narrative inspiration. (Charnas provides the introductions to the new ebook editions of *The Night Inside* and its sequel, *Blood and Chrysanthemums*.)

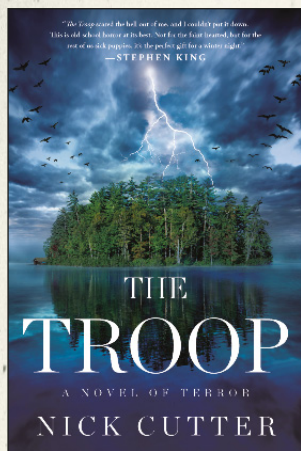
Baker's books arrived on store shelves in time to take advantage of 1990s vampire fever, something she notes was both a blessing and a curse.

"Writing during a boom was both reassuring and daunting," she explains. "Daunting because every time you went to the bookstore there were another slew of vampire novels out and you wondered why on earth anyone would need yours, and reassuring because, quite frankly, a good number of them were terrible. I would tell myself that if *that* book could get published, surely mine could."

After three vampire novels, Baker vanished from the literary scene almost as quickly as she arrived on it. As it turns out, it wasn't exactly a conscious choice – and she hopes to be back in the near future, though not with another vampire book.

"I suffered a massive attack of writer's block that went on for years," she says. "I tried everything I could – writing, not writing, therapy, coaching – and eventually I'd end up sitting on the floor crying. I finally had to stop trying or go crazy. After a few years of just leaving it alone, a friend told me that I really needed to write again – and I promptly started crying again. I don't know if I'll ever be able to write with the same speed and process I did before, but I've almost finished a new novel. It's taken me almost twenty years but the end is in sight."





they're paranoid and afraid. Although the idea of people being isolated, infected and at the mercy of human nature has been done several times before, it takes on a whole new life when seen through the eyes of an adolescent. It's reminiscent of *Lord of the Flies* but taken to an even further extreme, and the smaller group of characters allows the reader to become more invested in each of their back stories. At times, their personality traits can seem a little over the top, but they're not entirely unbelievable.

The story is occasionally broken up by newspaper articles, interview transcripts and court hearings that paint a much larger picture for the reader, giving insight into parts of the story that the characters aren't aware of. These interludes provide a nice break from the more horrific proceedings and effectively prevent

the reader from becoming desensitized.

Part biological and part psychological, *The Troop* is a modern campfire story that will resonate with any fan of the genre.

MIKE BEARDSALL

WILD FELL: A GHOST STORY

Michael Rowe
Chizine Publications

If you are familiar with the Georgian Bay region of Ontario, chances are you've heard your fair share of campfire stories; whether they be tales of witches that kidnap children and eat them in abandoned cottages, whispers of monstrously large creatures that swim in the depths of Lake Huron or stories of ghost ships appearing over the horizon. (At least, these were some of the ones I heard growing up). The picturesque northern setting, which also inspired many famous Group of Seven paintings, is decidedly ripe for supernatural works of fiction. Michael Rowe's new novel, *Wild Fell: A Ghost Story*, manages to capture the spooky-beautiful tone of a Georgian Bay summer perfectly, and while Rowe sets the novel up in traditional ghost story fashion, he quickly breaks convention and puts his own personal stamp on the subgenre.

The prologue is rich enough to fill a book itself; set in the small town of Alvina, Ontario, in 1960, a high school couple meet a shockingly gruesome end after they set out to explore the crumbling Wild Fell estate on Blackmore Island, a house long thought to be evil incarnate.

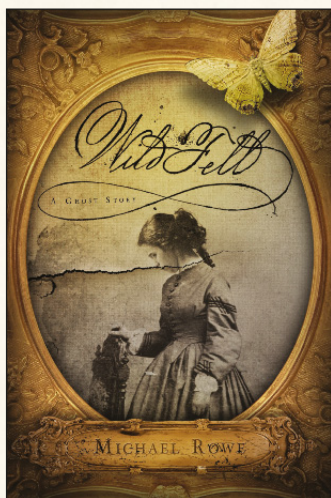
Years later, Jameson Browning comes to own the property, after grabbing it at a good price with the intention of bringing some new life to it. Taken at face value, the plot seems like a classic *Amityville* chapter. However Rowe's second novel isn't a typical haunted house tale; it luxuriates in Jameson's childhood with incredibly sensitive detail, as the not-quite-masculine Jameson and his not-quite-feminine best friend Lucinda (or "Hank," as she prefers) deal with issues such as gender identity, bullying and the general tortures of growing up.

The layers of the plot get complicated further as young Jameson develops an imaginary friendship with Amanda, a girl he sees when he looks in the mirror, and who seems to be growing more powerful (and much less imaginary) as time goes on; she's seemingly even able to control Jameson's body. And all this happens *before* he comes into possession of the estate.

While some readers may be put off by the unconventional pacing, the uncertainty aroused by the plot- and tone-shifts fuel a psychologically uneasy read. Rowe demonstrates great skill when balancing these shifts, making for a terrifying, yet often incredibly touching story.

Best read in an abandoned cottage by candlelight.

JESSA SOBCHUK



LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

MOANING OVER MONSTER PORN

Exactly eleven years ago I got my start at *Rue Morgue* writing the now long-defunct horror smut column, in which I reviewed mostly terrible soft-core erotica featuring vampires, mad scientists and several other monster mainstays that could be created for next-to-no effects budget. These films were released so frequently that they became ubiquitous (kind of like tentacle erotica in Japan), so we eventually abandoned covering them for more interesting fare. This is why it was so strange to read about Amazon's (as well as other retailers') sudden war on Monster Porn (or "cryptozoological erotica," as several of its authors prefer to call it), in articles published on CNN and at businessinsider.com in December.

Ebooks with largely self-explanatory titles such as *Moan for Bigfoot*, *Demons Love Ass*, *Frankenstein's Bitch* and *Taken by the Tentacle Monsters* were suddenly yanked from digital bookstores on both sides of the pond after the UK media whipped itself into a frenzy about this alleged "filth." Accusations flew about fiction featuring non-consensual sex (fair, but I could list no small number of traditionally published novels that trade in that exact subject matter) and bestiality (wait, is it still bestiality if the creature is wholly fictional/mythological?). While this undoubtedly raises some discussion-worthy questions, it also brings with it another fundamental problem.

All of the books caught up in this dragnet of knee-jerk censorship came from the self-publishing arena, not the realm of mainstream or even small presses, some of which have been dabbling in similar areas for years. For instance, a decade ago, Circlet Press/Masquerade Books published the *Darker Passions* series (by Amarantha Knight, pen name of author Nancy Kilpatrick), which re-envisioned the classic *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* stories, among others, as erotica. Yet these books, as well as many other non-horror, but no less sexual and confrontational releases (see: the works of the Marquis de Sade, and other titles featuring incestuous relations), which also seem to contradict Amazon's policy of not selling fiction containing "offensive depictions of graphic sexual acts," remain available. Anyone else sense a double standard?

I'm certainly not arguing that Monster Porn is high literature — to be honest, I have no more interest in *Moan for Bigfoot* than I have in E.L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* — but I will fight for the right for it to exist, and for adults to ultimately be their own gatekeepers. Censorship remains, after all, a very slippery slope. And as we horror fans know all too well, one person's "offensive material" is another person's joy.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: SERIAL CUTTER

Eelus has been stenciling the walls of East London since he moved there in early 2000. His vibrant work – often featuring skeletons, monsters and dark angels alongside pop culture imagery – has been exhibited in galleries alongside Shepard Fairey and Banksy. But in the last couple of years he decided it was time to try something new. Inspired by a paper artist with whom he shared studio space, he traded in his stencils for blades to try his hand as a paper-cut artist. He drew inspiration from a lifelong love of Hammer movies and a youth spent in the video store. “So much paper-cut art at the moment is very commercial and very sweet,” he says. “Couples holding hands sitting under starry skies, woodland creatures, etc., etc. I just wanted to offer a darker alternative to all that.”

His new 3-D work, which was recently displayed for a solo exhibit at Brighton’s ink_d gallery, focuses on classic horror, namely the Universal Monsters. The Basil Gogos-esque colour scheme mixes well with Eelus’ iconic style. The success of that show inspired him to create an ongoing series, which began with “Warmest Place to Hide” (inspired by John Carpenter’s *The Thing*, of course), a refreshingly abstract take on the film’s imagery. He continued the Carpenter theme with his *They*



Live-inspired “Been Here Since Forever.” He’s also created paper-cut cover art for Death Waltz Records’ release of Hammer’s *Twins of Evil* soundtrack, taking a cue from the Technicolor-style graveyards for which the studio was known.

Working with paper is cathartic, the artist explains. “I love the feeling of cutting through paper; it’s very meditative, very relaxing. I love sitting in my studio, surrounded by all my junk, listening to music and soundtracks, or podcasts, and just drawing out these ideas, refining them, cutting them.”

That said, Eelus admits that the early stages can be an onerous task; he often creates multiple compositions until he lands on just the right idea. But during the assembling, cutting and painting, sometimes happy accidents happen.

“‘Warmest Place to Hide’ was a typical example of this,” he notes. “I must have drawn 50-plus different human shapes, and



then even more styles of alien to go within that human shape. I was moving the eyeballs around to see where they looked best and balanced, but I still wasn’t 100 percent happy. I went to stand up so I could get away from the desk and take a break, and as I did I knocked the desk, nudging one of the eyeballs so it slid partly underneath part of the alien’s form. That was it: *perfect!*”

Along with some planned print releases through his shop, Eelus is working on material for his first North American solo show, planned for LA’s Gallery 1988.

Stalk his blog, which includes some incredible step-by-step process shots, at blog.eelus.com. 🐼



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THE GORE-MET

MENU: TO VHS OR NOT TO VHS?

Like vinyl records, VHS tapes have been enjoying a renaissance in the underground horror community. While there's a compelling argument to be made for the aural superiority of analog audio over digital — human ears are analog input devices perfectly suited to the frequency range of vinyl records — there is no similar argument to be made for VHS. There isn't a display device extant that approaches the estimated 324 megapixel resolution of the eye. Analog video has an approximate resolution of 0.4 megapixels, so small wonder it looks fuzzy!

I don't miss VHS as a home video format, even though I have hundreds of tapes squirreled away in my crawlspace. Some are films that have never had a digital release, more are museum pieces, and most are ones I can't bear to see go to the landfill. They are historical artifacts and I am their curator.

But VHS crept back, right under my bloody nose! It started in 2008 with the launch of *Lunchmeat*, an exceedingly fun independent magazine devoted exclusively to VHS worship (*RM#84*). Then, the first significant new tape on the market in nearly a decade was the limited clamshell release of Ti West's *House of the Devil* (2009) in 2010. And in 2011, John W. Bowen and I teamed up on the Camp Motion Pictures VHS/DVD box set featuring 1989's *The Basement* (*RM#116*).

It got serious in 2012. Boutique VHS labels such as Uneasy Archive, Vultra Video and Horror Boobs began popping up. New York Horror Film Productions released the *The Turnpike Killer*, a VHS/DVD combo in a replica VHS big box (*RM#125*). Indie distributor Wild Eye Releasing got in on the act and started releasing titles including *Blitzkrieg: Escape from Stalag 69* (*RM#85*) on tape; Troma took a cue from '80s champs Wizard Video and put out *The Toxic Avenger* (1984) in a clamshell with a library case; and Full Moon even re-released dozens of its classic titles on VHS, packaging them in vintage cases dug up in a warehouse.

The current market for new VHS tapes is small but enthusiastic. Collectors are driven by nostalgia for the garish big boxes they came in and the mom-and-pop video stores that rented them in the '80s — even



Devil Story

those who weren't born at that point. As a result, there's a generation of horror fans reliving VHS vicariously through Facebook and mail-order.

The appeal now is the appeal then: packaging. Big boxes and oversized clamshells are the norm. Along with the tape — and a DVD or DVD-R for those who don't have a VCR to watch it — most labels include a poster and trinkets such as buttons and stickers. Titles are usually limited to runs of 25 or 50 and range in price from \$30 to \$60.

The majority of the films being released on VHS are underground, and there's an emphasis on splatter flicks. Sub Rosa Studios is the oldest and most ambitious label serving this new niche. In fact, I regularly reviewed their tapes for *Rue Morgue* — fourteen years ago! The label went defunct when VHS originally died but was resurrected in late 2012. Since then, they've released tapes of everything from old Sub Rosa titles such as Tim Ritter's *Truth or Dare: A Critical Madness* (1986), to *The Deadly Spawn* (1983) and H.G. Lewis classics *Blood Feast* (1963) and *2000 Maniacs* (1964).

Massacre Video is a new player at the forefront of this revival. The shot-on-video slasher *555* (1988) was their first release, both on DVD and big-boxed VHS (see *RM#120*). Since then, they've released

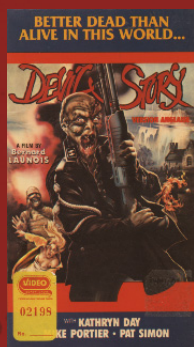
Toetag Pictures' *The Redsin Tower* (2006), a box set of the *August Underground* trilogy and two favourites around Casa del Gore-met — the quirky H.G. Lewis-inspired *The Undertaker and His Pals* (1966) and the hilarious gore-fest *The Abomination* (1986)!

Wait... *The Abomination* has never had a proper DVD release. Okay, it was shot-on-video and is never going to look great, but I'd prefer the best-looking presentation possible. I get the appeal of these VHS releases, but there are films that have only ever been available on VHS I'd like to see restored and presented properly on shiny disc.

Another SOV time capsule, *The Ripper* (1985), is lost to time, too. Tom Savini may disavow the three minutes he's in it, but like all '80s SOV flicks there's some cheese gore to guffaw over!

What about the absurd French monster mash/gore job *Devil Story* (1985)? The video master used for the super-rare 1988 Kecina Productions Ltd. VHS release had tape damage! Or the sleazy Italian *Exorcist* rip-offs *The Eerie Midnight Horror Show* (1974) and *The Possessor* (1975)? They've never had a legitimate DVD release either! Forget this VHS thing...

It just goes to show that there are still plenty of dirty gems out there ripe for re-release on multiple formats. You can stay on top 'em by joining Beneath the Underground on Facebook.



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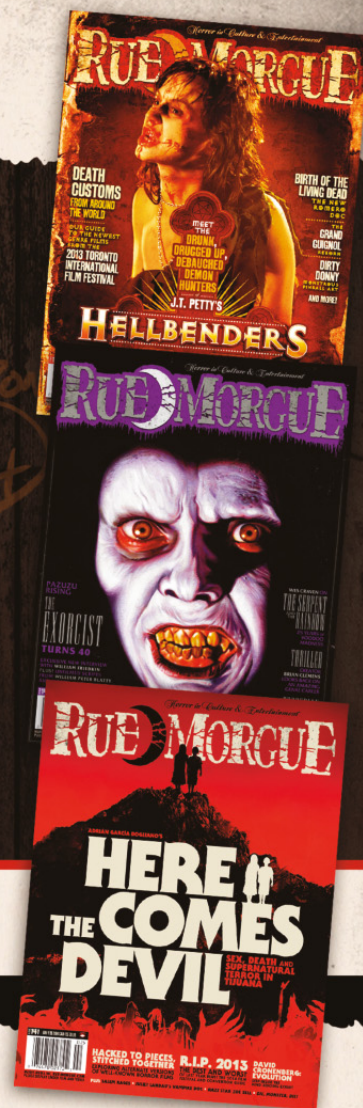
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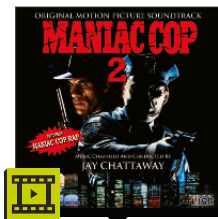
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REVIEWS BY TOMB DRAGOMIR, MARK R. HASAN, GEORGE PACHECO
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MANIAC COP 2

Jay Chattaway

BLUE UNDERGROUND

Limited to 1000 copies and available from Blue Underground's website, Jay Chattaway's previously unreleased score for *Maniac Cop 2* has been upgraded. It now boasts substantial orchestral elements, yet its anchor remains that eerie "whispering" theme — a taunting little whistle that Chattaway twists into his own "Dies Irae" for the world's most uncompromising vigilante cop. Classic '80s drum loops ripple and bubble throughout the score, but the strings, brass and eerie liturgical incantations provide great contrasts as the eponymous and unstoppable thing repeatedly collides with a (supposedly) civil society. Chattaway's orchestrations favour both shock stabs and almost organic transitions between fragmented and formal material, plus chromatic brass and a Herrmannesque fandango in lengthy action cues such as "Chills and Thrills." Likely mastered from several sources, the stereo image varies from robust to slight, but it's a treat to finally enjoy Chattaway's underrated gem after a 23-year absence.

MRH ☠☠☠

SOUNDTRACK

scription of the latest faux-soundtrack from Swedish composer Call Me Greenhorn (a.k.a. Magnus Sellergren). *Cutthroats at Midnight's* seven tracks are unified by polyrhythmic echo-chamber percussion, booming bass and atmospherics supplied by vintage synths. Most of the songs hover in and around the dub sound, occasionally dipping into straight-up atmospheric numbers ("A Conspiracy of Friends" and "The Coward"). The real standout piece, "It's Murder," sits firmly between the two. Its three-minute techno-funk workout practically dares you to not nod your head along with its sleek, slick bounce and dark vibes. *Cutthroats at Midnight*, along with several of Sellergren's other recordings, is available through the Call Me Greenhorn Bandcamp page. Support the indies! TZ ☠☠☠



OVO

Abisso

SUPERNATURAL CAT

Abisso is an Italian term for the murkiest depths of Earth's seas and, fittingly, listeners descending through this album will find the darkness and pressure increasing progressively, growing ever colder and producing a sensation akin to drowning. But amidst the eerily chilling drones, moans, screams, guitar feedback and minimalist beats, are moments (as in the shimmering "Harmonia Macrocosmica") of luminous beauty, like fluorescent undersea creatures swimming past, illuminating the blackness. How a recording can sound so incredibly vast, yet feel so asphyxiatingly claustrophobic remains a mystery, but one worthy of repeated investigation. Those who worship at the altars of Coil, latter-day Skinny Puppy, Diamanda Galas and even the black metal of Leviathan or Xasthur will find much to appreciate here. It's a shame some lousy pop-punk band called themselves

EXPERIMENTAL

Marianas Trench first, because the deepest part of the world's oceans is a domain better suited to these noise experimentalists. GT ☠☠☠



JOHNNY B. MORBID

Welcome to Die!

INDEPENDENT

From the birthplace of the Pine Barrens Devil (that's New Jersey), comes Johnny B. Morbid. Though it's typical horror punk, *Welcome to Die!* does cast a wider net than expected, with a few punk cuts here and a couple metal tracks there. The album hits the mark on the rougher material ("Death Undefeated," "Stockholm") and features an apocalyptic power ballad ("Last Day Alive"), which could have been nicked from Michale Graves' acoustic songbook. The fact that band leader Carmen Ugato currently plays bass for the ex-Misfit and was once a drum tech for Marky Ramone is a fun fact, but *Welcome to Die!* is strictly

PUNK

middle-of-the-pack ghoulish rock that's light on lyrical fright and suffers from uneven vocals. More "comic geek" than "horror freak" and hardly morbid at all, we like how the album hits a lot of different notes, but it just feels like we've heard them all before. TD ☠☠



GHOST B.C.

If You Have Ghost

UNIVERSAL MUSIC

When Ghost capped off its first Toronto gig with a cover of The Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun," it was a welcome dose of eccentricity. A few years (and a "Silent B.C.") later comes release number three and it's nice to see that the eclecticism wasn't a one-off. The closest this (mostly) Dave Grohl-produced covers EP comes to the occult rock they're known for is on the semi-eponymous "If You Have Ghosts," originally by infamous outsider artist Roky Erickson. Elsewhere, we're treated to

ROCK



CALL ME GREENHORN

Cutthroats at Midnight

INDEPENDENT

How does that old joke go: reggae legend Lee "Scratch" Perry and John Carpenter walk into a bar? Okay, that's not actually an old joke, but it is a good de-

SOUNDTRACK

CASTLEVANIA — LORDS OF SHADOW: MIRROR OF FATE

Oscar Araujo

SUMTHING ELSE

Oscar Araujo's latest epic score for the *Castlevania* franchise is another remarkable opus that melds a huge orchestral sound with some overt electronic elements to capture a world of myth and mayhem. Where "Gabriel's Farewell" is a warm, resonating theme with broad chords performed by a huge array of strings, the action cues are filled with instrumental nuances and gestures to ensure there's minimal monotony. "Night Watchman" is invigorated with thunderous ethnic percussion and a beautiful variety of low brass, and Araujo also uses fluttering wooden sounds that evoke an army of massing bowmen. Most of the kinetic material is built up from a circulating three-note motif, and its constant use is tempered by softer, elongated cues, such as the choral-heavy "Theatre." Engineered to exploit even the most tepid sound system, the superior production brings out the snarling majesty of Araujo's brilliant writing. MRH ☠☠☠

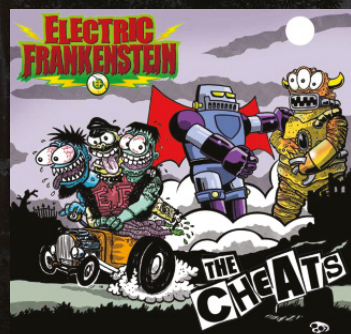
SOUNDTRACK



LISTEN to MY NIGHTMARE

New Jersey's Electric Frankenstein has built a two-decade legacy based on two key ingredients. First, their own brand of stitched-together monster rock that's a combination of old school punk (think Dead Boys) and hard rock (think AC/DC). Second, the high-quality monster and hot rod artwork that makes every album, EP and gig poster a frame-worthy collectible.

It's looking to be a mammoth year for EF projects, beginning with a new split LP with Pittsburgh band The Cheats, to be released sometime



this spring on Screaming Crow Records. The release features three new songs and a cover of the Dead Boys' serial killer shocker "Son of Sam." It's the new track "Frankensong," however, that perfectly sums up the band's formula.

"'Frankensong' is a musical hybrid, like the Frankenstein monster, in that it has this huge heavy metal buildup that

grows and then goes off into a kind of death rock sound from the Christian Death days, and finally morphs near the end into full punk rock sound and fury," explains guitarist and band founder Sal Canzonieri. "We wanted to do a song that could flow from one style to the other seamlessly to show how rock and roll never dies but shifts and turns."

Canzonieri is also currently working on a soon-to-be-released follow up to 2003's art book *Electric Frankenstein: High Energy Punk Rock & Roll Poster Art* (Dark Horse Books), which featured a huge collection of the band's gig posters by artists such as Coop, Frank Kozik and Johnny Ace. *Son of Electric Frankenstein* will feature every EF gig poster, illustration, record cover from the band's second decade (2003-2013).

"*Son of Electric Frankenstein* will be even better than our first book, as there are so many great artists in this one that were not in the first one, plus most of the great artists that were in the first one too," says Canzonieri. "Even John Pound is in the second one, who did the art for the Wacky Packs and Garbage Pail Kids card sets back in the day."

And for vinyl collectors, Little T & A Records just reissued EF's 2005 *Burn Bright, Burn Fast!* album — boasting artwork by none other than the legendary Basil Gogos.

"All the monster kids in the 1960s loved his dramatic style of painting, which inspired many of today's great album cover artists," asserts Canzonieri. "The concept was part his and part mine; he usually does straight portraits but this is his first action-style painting. I wanted him to play up the concept that it was an Electric Frankenstein, not just any Frankenstein monster"

It seems like this might just be the year Electric Frankenstein conquers the world.

AARON VON LUPTON

faithful yet sinister covers of pop songs by Depeche Mode and fellow Swedes Army of Lovers and ABBA, before closing with a rousing live take of "Secular Haze." This collection is sure to keep fans sated 'til the next full-length arrives. **GT** ☠☠☠



CRYPTICUS

The Barrens

RAZORBACK RECORDS

Denver-based Crypticus is cut from a different sort of death metal cloth, laying claim to lyrical inspiration from the works of H.P. Lovecraft while also flying the flag of Italian horror and giallo atmosphere within its morbid metallic moods. The group's third album, *The Barrens*, screams these influences from the proverbial rooftops on tracks such as "Necronom IX" — where morose guitar melodies and gloomy keyboard lines combine to create a palpable, creepy atmosphere — and "Misanthropy Mine," an album highlight that hinges on chainsaw axe tone and a vintage-sounding organ groan during the bridge section. Elsewhere, the band aims for the brain with a simple-yet-effective style of old school death metal that mixes double-kick Swedeth rhythms with raw and punk-fuelled riffs, overdriven to hell with all the subtlety of a speeding truck. Final verdict? The Ancient Ones approve. **GP** ☠☠☠ 1/2



LESCH-NYHAN

Indistinguished Remains EP

HORROR PAIN GORE DEATH PRODUCTIONS

Lesch-Nyhan syndrome is a condition that causes the buildup of uric acid in the bodily fluids of those afflicted with it, and is marked by instances of self-mutilation. Any guesses what type of music these guys play? This is six tracks of perfectly serviceable old-school death metal in which drum-

beats blast, riffs race frantically before slowing to a chug, and vocals alternately growl and howl through numbers such as "Fetal Brain Deterioration" and "Organ Discharge." Nothing wrong with any of that, but it's not particularly memorable, either. If you're one of those people (and I know you're out there) who just can't get enough meat-and-potatoes death metal, consider this a worthy addition to your collection. Those seeking a more adventurous aural experience would be advised to invest their time and money on something more in the vein of Portal's *Vex-ovoid* album. **GT** ☠☠☠



EXHUMED/IRON REAGAN

Split 12 Inch

TANKCRIMES

The death/grind splatter madness of San Jose's Exhumed fits in perfectly alongside Richmond, Virginia's thrash-core squad Iron Reagan. Both bands turn in four tracks apiece, with Exhumed kicking out two new originals — "Gravewalker" and "Dead to the World" — as well as a pair of punk covers in the shape of Minor Threat's "Seeing Red" and "Ready to Fight," by Detroit's hardest sons, Negative Approach. Meanwhile, Iron Reagan kicks out four new tracks, all of which dominate with speed metal riffs and piss 'n' vinegar vocal aggression reminiscent of the very best in mid-'80s punk/metal crossover. Since both Exhumed tracks borrow heavily from the band's gore metal influences while also presenting a stripped down, punk rock spirit, this split 12-inch offers a nicely balanced feeling of two groups whose strengths truly play off each other with fiendish glee. **GP** ☠☠☠



CINEPLOIT RECORDS BOASTS AN UNUSUAL DEDICATION TO EUROPEAN HORROR SCORES



HORROR SOUNDTRACK COLLECTING HAS EXPERIENCED A HUGE RESURGENCE THANKS IN LARGE PART TO A RE-NEWED INTEREST IN VINYL RECORDS -

the format offers fans a unique way to experience some of their favourite movies through both sound and artwork. While several labels are busy reissuing older scores, Austria's Cineploit records takes a different approach by releasing high-quality albums by obscure artists influenced by specific horror movies and composers, primarily from '70s- and '80s-era Italian and European cinema.

Cineploit, which was launched in 2012, currently has a catalogue of only seven LPs and five EPs (digital and CD versions are often also available) by a handful of diverse artists. Among them, Germany's Thelema which plays dark atmospheric music influenced by works as varied as Howard Shore's *Videodrome* score and Goblin's legendary music for *Suspiria*, and London's Zoltan, which offers a mix of heavy synth and prog rock, creating music the group describes as "Michael Mann directing chunk-blower classick *Zombie Holocaust*." Meanwhile, Germany's Sospetto (*RM#141*) and Montreal's Orgasmo Sonore both pay tribute to spaghetti splatter, with the latter delving particularly deep into the genre, recently releasing a 12" mini-LP in tribute to the great giallo composer Bruno Nicolai. For a record label, it's a highly niche concept.

"Back in 2011, I was working on a cinematic project with a friend, and when I thought about who could be interesting for us to work with, I realized there isn't really a platform for this kind of music," explains Cineploit founder and former extreme metal drummer Alex Wank (Pungent Stench). "My partner had his new album with Thelema ready, and I also already knew Frank from Orgasmo Sonore, as I had helped him a bit with sales for his self-released *Revisiting Obscure Film Music Vol. 1* album here in Europe. So in January 2012 I decided to form my own label and Thelema and Orgasmo Sonore joined."

Not surprisingly, Wank is a huge soundtrack buff with twenty years of collecting behind him. Although Cineploit's roster does delve into American, John

Carpenter-esque soundtrack territory from time to time, the majority of its releases reflect Wank's preference for European music.

"I guess the American approach was more an orchestral one, and here in Europe they just tried out everything to find the right mood for the film," he explains. "When I think about how many scores in Europe were composed without the composer even knowing the film, it's just unbelievable how supportive the music was in the end! Also, there is a certain melancholy in Italian music, which you only can have if you were born there, I guess."

While the music offered by each artist stands on its own, equally impressive is Cineploit's dedication to physical presentation, with most releases pressed on 180g vinyl, often on beautifully coloured wax, and wrapped in high-quality sleeve artwork. For example, Zoltan's recent mini-LP tribute to *Psychomania* comes on green marbled vinyl, and Thelema's tribute to David Cronenberg's *Scanners* is a striking yellow and cream combination. The results are so beautiful you almost don't want your needle to touch them. Both records feature custom sleeve art, with Zoltan using an original painting of *Psychomania*'s death wheelers, while Thelema uses an interpretation of Michael Ironside's brain-busting pose from the *Scanners* poster.

"The artists mostly come up with their own sleeve work and I try to finalize the record in the best possible way because I think every detail is important for a great vinyl release," notes Wank. "Especially when you do cinematic music, the visual aspect is important, from the graphics, the paintings, the paper of the sleeve, the printing, the colours, the inner sleeves, to the vinyl itself. The whole release has to be perfect!"

While Cineploit's releases have thus far been purely of the horror variety, collectors shouldn't be surprised if the label eventually explores new

territory.

"I am open for all kinds of cinematic projects," says Wank. "All the artists I work with are influenced heavily by the old masters of film composing - mainly the Italians but also composers from the '70s in general. I would say that although they all sound different they have one thing in common - a passion for cinema and a passion for soundtrack music!"



PLAY DEAD



NOW PLAYING > KILLER CROSSOVERS, STATE OF DECAY: BREAKDOWN

After the Platinum Dunes remake, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* fans were surprised to discover that Freddy Krueger's next appearance wouldn't be in a new movie. Instead, he was made available as a downloadable character in 2011's *Mortal Kombat*. Though his appearance in the fighting game is incongruous, it's just one of the latest in a flood of references to, and character appearances from, popular horror movies in video games. Of all the licensed or unofficial nods to the genre, these are the six of coolest.

1. THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI (1989)



Sega Genesis

In a battle of titans that could be described as "Godzilla vs The Ninja" or "Sega vs Intellectual Property," the fire-breathing monster serves as one of the bosses. Though smaller in stature and missing his trademark dorsal spines, it's unquestionably Godzilla that faces the ninja Shinobi. That wasn't the only bit of copyright infringement Sega indulged in, as the game also featured a glut of unlicensed characters as enemies – among them, Rambo, the Terminator and even Spider-Man and Batman! Future re-releases of the game would alter the sprites into more generic villains.

2. CONKER'S BAD FUR DAY (2001) AND CONKER: LIVE & RELOADED (2005)



Nintendo 64/Xbox

Conker's Bad Fur Day developed a cult reputation among gamers for its enjoyably jokey tale of an alcoholic squirrel fighting militant teddy bears, which also featured a singing mountain of feces and the Xenomorph from *Alien*. The final stage, also seen in the revamped *Live & Reloaded* for Xbox, recreates the climax of *Aliens*. After a Xenomorph advances on Conker's girlfriend, the squirrel dons a pint-sized version of Ellen Ripley's exo suit to battle with the familiar creature – but not before uttering the classic line "get away from her, you bitch!"

3. FAR CRY 3: BLOOD DRAGON (2012)



PC, PS3, Xbox 360

All of the games on this list have pop culture nods, but none revel in them quite like this '80s-shellacked revision of *Far Cry 3*. Developed by Ubisoft Montreal, *Blood Dragon* pits cyborg commando Rex (voiced by *Terminator*/*Aliens* alum Michael Biehn) against a variety of nemeses. Among them are the Running Dead: creatures whose pointed ears, greyish skin and glowing eyes make them dead ringers for the titular monsters from *C.H.U.D.* And when Rex mentions "cannibalistic humanoid underground delinquents," it's sure to bring a smile to the faces of B-movie fans.

4. LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW (2012)



PS3, Xbox 360

Disembowelling a legion of putrefying corpses in a game is a bit like a sugar rush. The makers of *Lollipop Chainsaw* capitalized on this by mixing together zombies, ultra-violence, bright pink hearts and its excitable young female protagonist, Juliet. Those who pre-ordered the game were given extra skins to modify their character.



One trades Juliet's blonde locks for short black hair and swaps her cheerleader outfit for a familiar blue-shirt-with-dark-pants combo as a tribute to Bruce Campbell's Ash in the *Evil Dead* series. It's the closest you'll get to a gender-swapped Ash outside of a cosplay expo.

5. GRAND THEFT AUTO V (2013)



PS3, Xbox 360

Looting, murder and the healing effect of prostitutes may have made the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise a success, but there's more to simulated street life than stealing cars and curbstomping grandmas. There's a number of pop culture references in the latest sequel (including one to *Jaws*), but the highlight comes when playing as Trevor, one of the game's three protagonists. One of his clothing options is the "Overlooked Red Blouson," the same

outfit Jack Nicholson sported in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*.

6. CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS (2014)

PC, PS3, PS4, Wii U, Xbox 360, Xbox One

If Freddy Krueger can be wedged into the *Mortal Kombat* universe, then surely there's a role for other cinema slashers in the video game world. Enter Michael Myers, who's been added as a playable character to *Call of Duty: Ghosts*. Available as downloadable content for *Ghosts*' "Fog" mission, John Carpenter's silent killer is depicted as living in a cabin in the woods and wielding an axe. While that may be more along Jason Voorhees' territory, it's still Myers' first game appearance since Wizard Video brought *Halloween* to the Atari 2600 in 1983.

ADAM CLARKE



STATE OF DECAY: BREAKDOWN

Xbox 360, PC
Undead Labs

How do you rejuvenate an already popular game? Well, you mod it, of course. Enter *Breakdown*, a DLC for the hit zombie survival title *State of Decay*, which strips the game of its story missions and turns the focus squarely on fortifying your base and finding characters who can join your enclave. The ultimate goal of *Breakdown* is to locate an RV, repair and refuel it, then escape the zombie-infested valley. Once you complete this goal, the game starts over again but everything is a little bit harder: there are more zombies, and fewer useful materials and vehicles. However, each playthrough allows you to carry over weapons, items and select characters from the previous session. As a result, the survivors you bring along become more valuable over time as you continue building up their stats. While the zombies get tougher, so do you.

The game map is the same, but completely unlocked from the get-go and the weaponry hasn't changed much. The addition of "hero" characters is useful because often they come with a maxed-out stat, such as shooting or an adeptness at a particular melee weapon (e.g., a dwarven battle axe for zombie decapitation). The ever-increasing difficulty also makes heroes much more valuable to an enclave, as they protect your home base while you adventure with other characters. As such, char-

acter death (which is permanent unless you start the game over) is even more heart-breaking in *Breakdown* because of the time and energy you spend building up their combat attributes over a number of playthroughs.

One of the DLC's few drawbacks is its graphical glitches, which seem more numerous than in the original. Having your

character stuck in a piece of furniture or a tree is not only annoying, it's usually fatal.

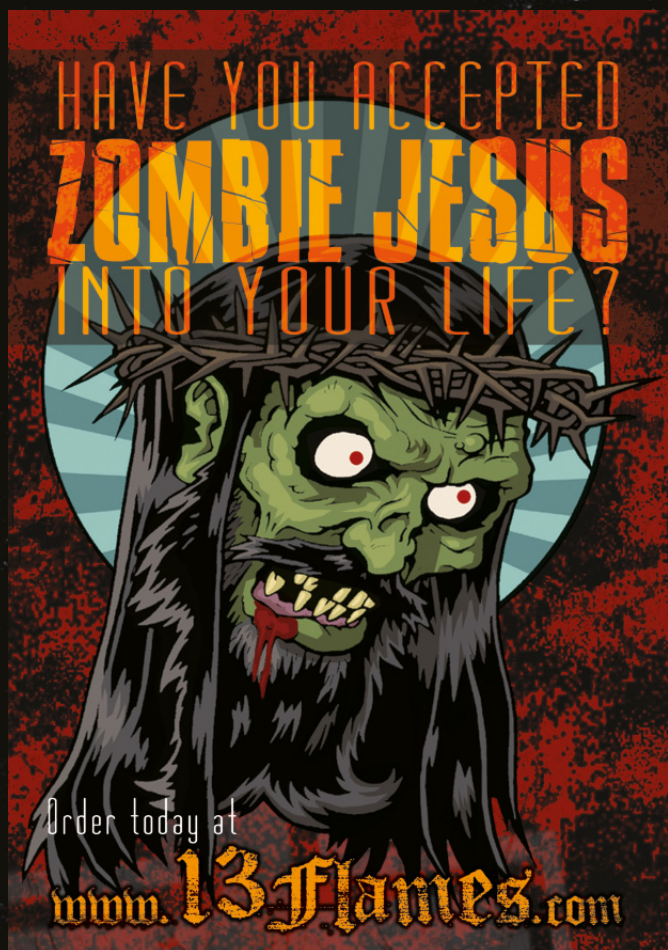
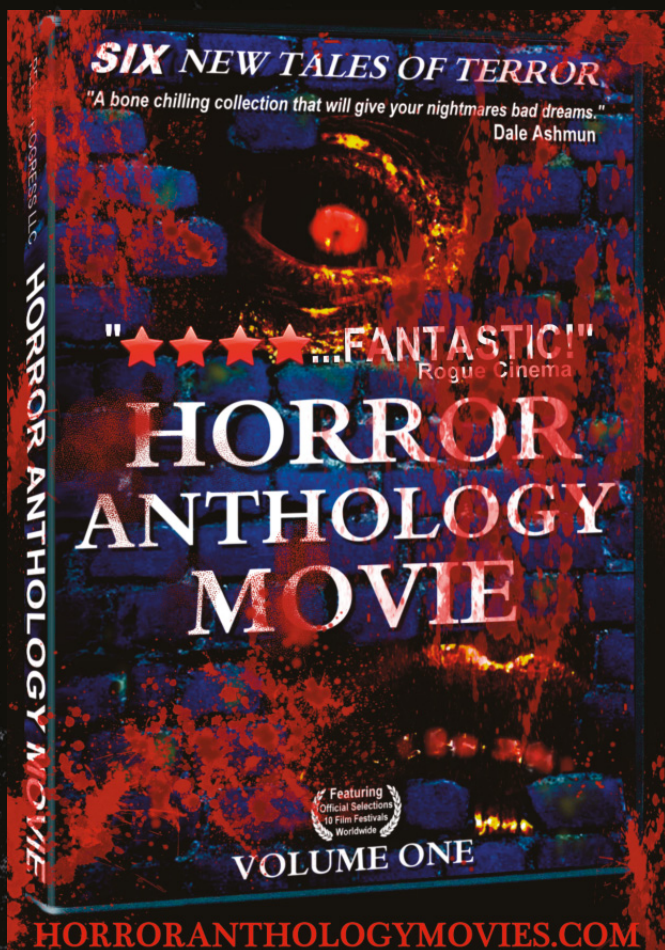
Overall, *Breakdown* is successful at reanimating the original *State of Decay*, increasing the playability to the point where with the right team of survivors, you can kill zombies forever. In many ways, it is reminiscent of those old-school '80s video games that never ended but just got harder and harder, making this a fine alternate version to an already fine zed-bashing title.

BRENTON BENTZ



HEADSHOTS: ALMOST ENDLESS REPLAYABILITY, HEROES WITH BENEFITS

MISFIRES: GRAPHIC GLITCHES TRAP CHARACTERS IN TERRAIN AND ALLOW ZOMBIES TO WALK THROUGH WALLS



CLASSIC CUT

THIRTEEN WOMEN

DIRECTED BY GEORGE ARCHAINBAUD ☠️-USA - 1932

Any self-respecting horror aficionado knows that although *Halloween* kicked off the slasher craze that went on to dominate genre cinema of the early 1980s, it was by no means the first of its kind. In 1974, a houseful of sorority girls were sliced and diced by a homicidal assailant in Bob Clark's *Black Christmas*, while a few years prior, Mario Bava's shocker *Twitch of the Death Nerve* was an even more primitive example of the body count film. One could even argue the sub-genre emerged in the early 1960s, with the gloriously immoral double whammy of *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom*. But in fact, the origins of the slasher can be traced back as early as 1932, courtesy of RKO and a wonderfully nasty little film called *Thirteen Women*.

After contacting a famed clairvoyant named Swami Yogadachi (C. Henry Gordon), a group of former sorority sisters each receive notice of their impending deaths. What these unlucky ladies do not know is that Yogadachi is under the mystical spell of Ursula Georgi (Myrna Loy), a former classmate who was once snubbed by this group of women as a result of her mixed-race heritage. One by one the women meet an untimely end, until only the strongest member of the group, Laura Stanhope (Irene Dunne), remains to fight Ursula to the death.

With the action punctuated by murder at systematic intervals, the basic formula for the stalk-and-slash movie becomes quickly apparent. The women in question are, much like the sex-mad teens who would populate the slashers of the '80s, little more than disposable fodder, with the possible exception of Laura, the film's embryonic version of the Final Girl. Whilst no match for Jamie Lee Curtis, Laura is set apart from the other women by an apparent strength and intelligence that ultimately allows her to escape the wrath of her nemesis. With character development kept to an economical minimum, audiences are simply waiting for the next kill, anxious to see how it will happen. For slasher films, the more bodies the better: something that *Thirteen Women* knew right from the start. After all, most of us struggle to remember the names of the characters in *Friday the 13th Part III*, but recalling how they met their maker is another matter entirely.

It is really only the maniacal Ursula herself who presents a full-fledged character. Much like the killers from *Terror Train*, *The Burning* or *Prom Night* (both films feature the killer crossing out victims in a photo), Ursula's motivation is cold-blooded revenge. The victim of racist bullying during her formative years, she turns to murder to remedy the injustices she has suffered, something consistently apparent throughout the evolution of the genre. Audiences are invited to simultaneously fear and sympathize with her (and in some ways root for her), much as they would later for anti-heroes such as Jason Voorhees, highlighting the pleasurable skewed morals these films often share.

There is one major difference that sets *Thirteen Women* apart from the films that would follow in its wake: the killings themselves. Ursula doesn't reach for a knife or meat cleaver (or shish kebab) to slay her victims; instead she uses her extra-sensory persuasion ability to trick them into suicide, by shooting themselves, falling in front of a train and even a trapeze plummet. Produced in a pre-Hays Code Hollywood (the film was later cut by fourteen minutes for a re-release), the bluntness with which the suicides are presented remains startling today, giving the film an edge of genuine malice and danger. But if the causes of death are unfamiliar, the choice of victims is certainly not. The film takes particular delight in killing its female characters, highlighting another slasher convention that would later become familiar – not to mention problematic. Meanwhile its American middle-class setting calls to mind the bourgeois peril of *April Fool's Day* (the sorority angle can also be witnessed in countless slashers such as *The House on Sorority Row* or *Scream 2*).

Given that suicide is the film's preferred method of execution, it is bitterly ironic it should feature the one and only screen role of a young actress named Peg Entwistle. Sadly it was not Entwistle's performance that would cement her legendary reputation, but her untimely death just a month prior to the film's release, when she infamously threw herself off the H of the Hollywood sign. Little did she know that she was part of something that would, decades later, change the face of horror cinema.

MICHAEL BLYTH



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